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SHAKESPEARE BEFORE SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Photogravure from a painting by T. Brooks.

This picture brings vividly before us an interesting incident of Shakespeare's early days. He has just been caught red-handed in the crime of poaching, and is now brought before Sir Thomas Lucy to answer to the gamekeeper's charge. Though this incident seems well authenticated, little is definitely known of this period of the great dramatist's life. But we do know that that energy, which later achieved so much, in his youth ran to waste in all kinds of lawless pleasures. The artist here depicts Sir Thomas Lucy sitting stern and grave as he listens to the constable's charge against Shakespeare. A slaughtered deer has been brought in, as testimony against him. Shakespeare himself, though seeming fully aware of the gravity of his offence, appears nevertheless composed and prepared to answer the charge. Though the magistrate may not be favorably impressed by the dauntless independence of Shakespeare's bearing, we may be sure he excites the admiration of the feminine members of the household, who are watching him with interest. All the accessories of carved woodwork, leaded casements, and tapestried walls interest us as depicting the interior of a typical manor-house of the period.

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HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
HENRY VAN LAUN

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY
J. SCOTT CLARK, A.M.
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

REVISED EDITION

VOLUME I

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DEDICATION

Even at the present day, the historian of Civilization in Europe and in France is amongst us, at the head of those historical studies which he formerly encouraged so much. I myself have experienced his kindness, learned by his conversation, consulted his books, and profited by that intellectual and impartial breadth, that active and liberal sympathy, with which he receives the labors and thoughts of others, even when these ideas are not like his own. I consider it a duty and an honor to inscribe this work to M. Guizot.

H. A. TAINE.

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SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

THE publication of M. Taine's "History of English Literature," in 1864, and its translation into English, in 1872, mark an epoch in educational history, especially in that of America. Prior to the appearance of this work, the total knowledge of British writers gained in the school and college life of the ordinary American youth was generally derived in the form of blind memorization from one text-book. This book was a combination of minute biographical detail with the generalities and abstractions of criticism. The student, and the general reader as well, did not really study the great writers at all; he simply memorized what someone had written about them; and he tried, generally in vain, to comprehend the real concrete significance of such critical terms as "bald," "nervous," "sonorous," etc. But with the distribution of M. Taine's great work came the beginning of better things. It was the first step in an evolution by no means yet completed—a movement paralleled in the development of methods of scientific study during the last four decades. Forty years ago the pupil did not study oxygen, electricity, or cellulose; he simply memorized what someone had written *about* these elements. He never touched and rarely saw the things themselves, and he counted himself fortunate if his instructor had the energy and the facilities to perform before the wondering class a few stock experiments. But all this has been changed. It is now universally recognized that the only sound method of studying any science is the laboratory method; that is, the study of the thing itself in all its manifestations. In methods of studying literature the progress towards a true scientific, that is, a laboratory method, has been much slower, but it seems almost equally sure. We are just now in the intermediate stage, where we study "editions with notes." Our educators, as a rule, have yet to learn that to memorize biographical data and the mere generalities and negations of criticism, or to trace out obscure

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allusions and doubtful meanings, is not to study a writer in any broad or fruitful sense. But the movement towards a true scientific method is already well begun; and, as we have said, to M. Taine belongs the honor of taking the initial step.

With Taine's work in hand the thoughtful reader may realize to a large extent the significance of Leslie Stephen's memorable dictum: "The whole art of criticism consists in learning to know the human being who is partially revealed to us in his written and spoken words." M. Taine's pages continually attest his deep conviction that "the style is the man," in a very comprehensive sense. In his Introduction to his "History of English Literature," we find such statements as these:—"You study the document only to know the man, just as you study the fossil shell only to know the animal behind it;" "Genuine history is brought into existence only when the historian begins to unravel . . . the living man, toiling, impassioned, entrenched in his customs, with his voice and features, his gestures and dress, distinct and complete as he from whom we have just parted in the street;" "Twenty select phrases from Plato and Aristophanes will teach you much more than a multitude of dissertations and commentaries;" "The true critic is present at the drama which was enacted in the soul of the artist or the writer; the choice of a word, the brevity or length of a sentence, the nature of a metaphor, the accent of a verse, the development of an argument—everything is a symbol to him; . . . in short he works out its (the text's) psychology; there is a cause for ambition, for courage, for truth, as there is for muscular movement or animal heat." To put M. Taine's great and characteristic merit into a sentence, we may say that he was the first writer on English literature to apply to it the fundamental principle, patent to every person of reflection, that we necessarily think in concrete terms, and that, therefore, a treatise must be valuable just in proportion to the concreteness of its presentation.

In order to show how great was the advance made by M. Taine's work over its predecessors, let us take a classic English writer at random and compare the treatment given him by M. Taine with that given in the text-book already mentioned. Suppose we open to the discussion of Addison. In the latter work we are told that he was born in 1672 and died in 1719; that he was a son of Lancelot Addison, a clergyman of some reputa-

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tion for learning; that Addison studied at the Charter House, where he formed a friendship with Richard Steele; that he afterwards entered Oxford; that he wrote various short poems and one long one, of which six whole lines are given as a specimen. We are told, also, that Addison held, in succession, certain political offices; that he contributed one-sixth of the papers found in Steele's "Tatler," more than one-half of those in the "Spectator," and one-third of those in the "Guardian"; that he published a drama called "Cato," which, the book informs us, is "cold, solemn, and pompous, written with scrupulous regard for the classical unities." We learn, further, that Addison married a countess, and died at the early age of forty-seven; that he had a quarrel with Pope; that his papers published in the "Tatler," the "Spectator," and the "Guardian" are marked by "fertility of invention and singular felicity of treatment"; that their variety is wonderful, and that everything is treated "with singular appropriateness and unforced energy"; that "there is a singular harmony between the language and the thought" (whatever that may mean); that Addison's delineations of the characters of men are wonderfully delicate; that he possessed humor in its highest and most delicate perfection; that his hymns breathe a fervent and tender spirit of piety. Contrary to the usage of its author, the text-book gives the whole sixteen lines of Addison's most famous hymn—the longest illustrative quotation in the whole four hundred pages—one blessed little oasis in a vast desert of dry biographical minutiæ and the abstract generalities of criticism. In the eight pages devoted to Addison there are not more than ten lines of real criticism; and these consist, for the most part, of what, to the ordinary reader, are meaningless adjectives or high-sounding epithets. Yet this is one of the very best chapters in the book. It is certainly a fair specimen of the barren method generally prevalent before the appearance of M. Taine's work.

Now let us compare his treatment of Addison. In the first place, scattered through the eighteen pages devoted to that writer (single-volume edition) we find no less than twenty-two illustrative passages, varying in length from six to 176 lines of very fine print. In his general treatment M. Taine begins by tracing the physical, social, and moral environment of Addison, thus leading us up to the consideration of the man and the writer by a natural process of evolution. We are first shown what kind of a man to expect, and then we are made acquainted with him.

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And all this is done with the most vivid and brilliant touches. Mere biographical details are either ignored or given incidental mention. The opening paragraph is a *tableau vivant*, in which we see Addison at Oxford, "studious, peaceful, loving solitary walks under the elm avenues." We are told how, from boyhood, "his memory is stuffed with Latin verses"; how "this limited culture, leaving him weaker, made him more refined"; how "he acquired a taste for the elegance and refinement, the triumphs and the artifices, of style"; how he became "an epicure in literature"; how "he naturally loved beautiful things"; how "Addison, good and just himself, trusted in God, also a being good and just"; how he writes his lay sermons; how "he cannot suffer languishing or lazy habits"; how "he is full of epigrams against flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits"; how "he explains God, reducing him to a mere magnified man"; with what literal precision he describes Heaven; how he "inserts prayers in his papers and forbids oaths"; how he made morality fashionable.

These illustrations of M. Taine's method might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough have surely been quoted to demonstrate how vastly more vivid and concrete is the idea of Addison, the man and the writer, gained by this method in comparison with that which was in general vogue before the publication of M. Taine's book. In the one case the reader has come into contact with a mere abstraction—a man of straw, with not a single feature that impresses itself on the imagination or the memory. In the other, he has come into communion with a real living soul—a man "of like passions with ourselves."

But the very qualities of the great French critic which make his book so helpful are the source of his defects as a writer. These qualities are national quite as much as individual. It is a truism that the French people lead the world in the field of criticism as applied to both literature and art. This superiority is strikingly illustrated also in St. Beuve, and is due to a certain quickness of perception, a certain power of concrete illustration, that seems inherent in the race of cultivated Frenchmen. M. Taine himself well defines this ethnic trait when he speaks of "France, with her Parisian culture, with her drawing-room manners, with her untiring analysis of characters and actions, her irony so ready to hit upon a weakness, her *finesse* so practised in the discrimination of modes of thought." This national talent is almost invariably associated with a nervous, sanguine tempera-

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ment, which easily tends to extremes of expression. We are therefore compelled to read M. Taine with some degree of caution when we are seeking exact statement and strict limitation.

Again, M. Taine is sometimes inaccurate or unjust from a lack of sympathy. He sometimes finds it impossible to rid himself of his Gallic predilections and aversions, especially when treating of the Puritan character or the stolid English morality. He cannot appreciate the religious conditions that surround his subject. He is always the Frenchman discussing the English writer. He cannot forbear to contrast the effect or the reception accorded to an author's work in England with that which it would have received in France; as when he says, concerning Addison's lay sermons in the "Spectator": "I know very well what success a newspaper full of sermons would have in France"; and again: "If a Frenchman was forbidden to swear, he would probably laugh at the first word of the admonition." A little farther on he objects to what he calls, with certainly picturesque concreteness, "the sticky plaster of his (Addison's) morality"—an expression that has led to Minto's sharp retort that Addison's morality was something which it is quite impossible for the Gallic conscience to conceive. Another illustration of that bias which compels us to be somewhat on our guard in reading Taine is found in his treatment of Milton. Although we may admit that the great Puritan poet peopled his paradise with characters having altogether too strong a British tinge, we are almost shocked to hear Taine and his disciple, Edmond Scherer, dilate upon Milton's Adam as "your true paterfamilias, with a vote; an M. P., an old Oxford man," etc., etc., or to hear them exclaim, "What a great many votes she (Eve) will gain among the country squires when Adam stands for Parliament!" Quite as striking is M. Taine's inability to understand Wordsworth.

But, after making these and all other due admissions concerning Taine's work, the fact stands that his "History of English Literature" meets fully Lowell's quaint definition of a classic, when he says, "After all, to be delightful is a classic." In reading this work we never feel that we have in our hands a textbook or even a history. It is rather a living, moving panorama. We see again the old miracles and moralities, with their queer shifts and their stark incongruities; we see the drawing-rooms and hear the conversation of the reign of Queen Anne, and walk through Fleet Street with Johnson. In a word, we realize in no

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small degree the full meaning of Leslie Stephen's dictum, in that we really feel that we know, in some degree at least, "the human being who is partially revealed to us in his written and spoken words."

Of course, no introduction to this work would be complete without some reference to the psychological theory on which it is based. We have reserved this point to the last because, for the general reader, what Taine says and how he says it, are far more interesting considerations than any theories on which the book may be based. In a word, the author held that both the character and the style of a writer are the outgrowth of his social and natural environment. And this environment, in Taine's opinion, affects not only the individual but the national character as manifested in the national literature. In discussing any literary production he would first ask: To what race and nation does the author belong? What is the influence of his geographical position and of his nation's advance in civilization? What about the duration of the literary phase represented by the writer in question? In developing this theory of the influence of environment M. Taine doubtless sometimes treats as permanent scientific factors influences and circumstances that are in their very nature variable. Yet this application of the theory is as consistent and plausible as it is everywhere apparent. A few illustrations of his psychological theory will make more plain than much abstract discussion the almost fatalistic nature of his method. For example, after vividly portraying the political and social conditions that had surrounded Milton from his birth, the French critic asks: "Can we expect urbanity here?" Again, in tracing Dryden's beginnings, he says: "Such circumstances announce and prepare, not an artist, but a man of letters." Much might be written of the detailed application of M. Taine's psychological theory. But the reader has already been too long detained from a perusal of the riches that fill the following pages. Charles Lamb once wrote: "I prefer the affections to the sciences." The majority of the readers of M. Taine will doubtless find so much to enjoy in his brilliant pages that they will care little for his theories, and will not allow certain defects in his sympathies to mar their enjoyment of this monumental work.

J. Scott Clark.

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HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE.

Photogravure from an engraving.

This picture shows the eminent French critic as he appeared thirty years ago. At that period his fame as a literary savant was spreading to the four quarters of the world, and he was lecturing daily to the crowds of students who had flocked to Paris to study literature under his guidance. In personal appearance he was unlike the traditional scholar, but resembled, in his quick, nervous energy and plain business-like ways, a keen-witted man of affairs. He was simple in dress, as the picture shows, and it is a noteworthy fact that the honors he received never caused him to lose his self-poise, or to cease his severe studies, which he carried on with diligence to the very day of his death. His face denotes the cool, critical, and well-balanced scholar, with the initiative to enter new fields of thought, and the will-power to impress his opinions upon others.

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HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

I

HISTORY, within a hundred years in Germany, and within sixty years in France, has undergone a transformation, owing to a study of literatures.

The discovery has been made that a literary work is not a mere play of the imagination, the isolated caprice of an excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners and customs and the sign of a particular state of intellect. The conclusion derived from this is that, through literary monuments, we can retrace the way in which men felt and thought many centuries ago. This method has been tried and found successful.

We have meditated over these ways of feeling and thinking and have accepted them as facts of prime significance. We have found that they were dependent on most important events, that they explain these, and that these explain them, and that henceforth it was necessary to give them their place in history, and one of the highest. This place has been assigned to them, and hence all is changed in history—the aim, the method, the instrumentalities, and the conceptions of laws and of causes. It is this change as now going on, and which must continue to go on, that is here attempted to be set forth.

On turning over the large stiff pages of a folio volume, or the yellow leaves of a manuscript, in short, a poem, a code of laws, a confession of faith, what is your first comment? You say to yourself that the work before you is not of its own creation. It is simply a mold like a fossil shell, an imprint similar to one of

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those forms embedded in a stone by an animal which once lived and perished. Beneath the shell was an animal and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell unless to form some idea of the animal? In the same way do you study the document in order to comprehend the man; both shell and document are dead fragments and of value only as indications of the complete living being. The aim is to reach this being; this is what you strive to reconstruct. It is a mistake to study the document as if it existed alone by itself. That is treating things merely as a pedant, and you subject yourself to the illusions of a book-worm. At bottom mythologies and languages are not existences; the only realities are human beings who have employed words and imagery adapted to their organs and to suit the original cast of their intellects. A creed is nothing in itself. Who made it? Look at this or that portrait of the sixteenth century, the stern, energetic features of an archbishop or of an English martyr. Nothing exists except through the individual; it is necessary to know the individual himself. Let the parentage of creeds be established, or the classification of poems, or the growth of constitutions, or the transformations of idioms, and we have only cleared the ground. True history begins when the historian has discerned beyond the mists of ages the living, active man, endowed with passions, furnished with habits, special in voice, feature, gesture, and costume, distinctive and complete, like anybody that you have just encountered in the street. Let us strive then, as far as possible, to get rid of this great interval of time which prevents us from observing the man with our eyes, the eyes of our own head. What revelations do we find in the calendered leaves of a modern poem? A modern poet, a man like De Musset, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, or Heine, graduated from a college and travelled, wearing a dress-coat and gloves, favored by ladies, bowing fifty times and uttering a dozen witticisms in an evening, reading daily newspapers, generally occupying an apartment on the second story, not over-cheerful on account of his nerves, and especially because, in this dense democracy in which we stifle each other, the discredit of official rank exaggerates his pretensions by raising his importance, and, owing to the delicacy of his personal sensations, leading him to regard himself as a Deity. Such is what we detect behind modern meditations and sonnets.

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Again, behind a tragedy of the seventeenth century there is a poet, one, for example, like Racine, refined, discreet, a courtier, a fine talker, with majestic perruque and ribboned shoes, a monarchist and zealous Christian, " God having given him the grace not to blush in any society on account of zeal for his king or for the Gospel," clever in interesting the monarch, translating into proper French " the *gaulois* of Amyot," deferential to the great, always knowing how to keep his place in their company, assiduous and respectful at Marly as at Versailles, amid the formal creations of a decorative landscape and the reverential bows, graces, intrigues, and finesses of the braided seigniors who get up early every morning to obtain the reversion of an office, together with the charming ladies who count on their fingers the pedigrees which entitle them to a seat on a footstool. On this point consult Saint-Simon and the engravings of Pérelle, the same as you have just consulted Balzac and the water-color drawings of Eugène Lami.

In like manner, on reading a Greek tragedy, our first care is to figure to ourselves the Greeks, that is to say, men who lived half-naked in the gymnasiums or on a public square under a brilliant sky, in full view of the noblest and most delicate landscape, busy in rendering their bodies strong and agile, in conversing together, in arguing, in voting, in carrying out patriotic piracies, and yet idle and temperate, the furniture of their houses consisting of three earthen jars and their food of two pots of anchovies preserved in oil, served by slaves who afford them the time to cultivate their minds and to exercise their limbs, with no other concern than that of having the most beautiful city, the most beautiful processions, the most beautiful ideas, and the most beautiful men. In this respect, a statue like the " Meleager " or the " Theseus " of the Parthenon, or again a sight of the blue and lustrous Mediterranean, resembling a silken tunic out of which islands arise like marble bodies, together with a dozen choice phrases selected from the works of Plato and Aristophanes, teach us more than any number of dissertations and commentaries.

And so again, in order to understand an Indian Purana, one must begin by imagining the father of a family who, " having seen a son on his son's knees," follows the law and, with axe and pitcher, seeks solitude under a banyan trees, talks no more,

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multiplies his fastings, lives naked with four fires around him under the fifth fire, that terrible sun which endlessly devours and resuscitates all living things; who fixes his imagination in turn for weeks at a time on the foot of Brahma, then on his knee, on his thigh, on his navel, and so on, until, beneath the strain of this intense meditation, hallucinations appear, when all the forms of being, mingling together and transformed into each other, oscillate to and fro in this vertiginous brain until the motionless man, with suspended breath and fixed eyeballs, beholds the universe melting away like vapor over the vacant immensity of the Being in which he hopes for absorption. In this case the best of teachings would be a journey in India; but, for lack of a better one, take the narratives of travellers along with works in geography, botany, and ethnology. In any event, there must be the same research. A language, a law, a creed, is never other than an abstraction; the perfect thing is found in the active man, the visible corporeal figure which eats, walks, fights, and labors. Set aside the theories of constitutions and their results, of religions and their systems, and try to observe men in their workshops or offices, in their fields along with their own sky and soil, with their own homes, clothes, occupations and repasts, just as you see them when, on landing in England or in Italy, you remark their features and gestures, their roads and their inns, the citizen on his promenades and the workman taking a drink. Let us strive as much as possible to supply the place of the actual, personal, sensible observation that is no longer practicable, this being the only way in which we can really know the man; let us make the past present; to judge of an object it must be present; no experience can be had of what is absent. Undoubtedly, this sort of reconstruction is always imperfect; only an imperfect judgment can be based on it; but let us do the best we can; incomplete knowledge is better than none at all, or than knowledge which is erroneous, and there is no other way of obtaining knowledge approximatively of bygone times than by seeing approximatively the men of former times.

Such is the first step in history. This step was taken in Europe at the end of the last century when the imagination took fresh flight under the auspices of Lessing and Walter Scott, and a little later in France under Chateaubriand, Augustin Thierry, Michelet, and others. We now come to the second step.

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II

On observing the visible man with your own eyes what do you try to find in him? The invisible man. These words which your ears catch, those gestures, those airs of the head, his attire and sensible operations of all kinds, are, for you, merely so many expressions; these express something, a soul. An inward man is hidden beneath the outward man, and the latter simply manifests the former. You have observed the house in which he lives, his furniture, his costume, in order to discover his habits and tastes, the degree of his refinement or rusticity, his extravagance or economy, his follies or his cleverness. You have listened to his conversation and noted the inflections of his voice, the attitudes he has assumed, so as to judge of his spirit, self-abandonment or gayety, his energy or his rigidity. You consider his writings, works of art, financial and political schemes, with a view to measure the reach and limits of his intelligence, his creative power and self-command, to ascertain the usual order, kind, and force of his conceptions, in what way he thinks and how he resolves. All these externals are so many avenues converging to one centre, and you follow these only to reach that centre; here is the real man, namely, that group of faculties and of sentiments which produces the rest. Behold a new world, an infinite world; for each visible action involves an infinite train of reasonings and emotions, new or old sensations which have combined to bring this into light and which, like long ledges of rock sunk deep in the earth, have cropped out above the surface and attained their level. It is this subterranean world which forms the second aim, the special object of the historian. If his critical education suffices, he is able to discriminate under every ornament in architecture, under every stroke of the brush in a picture, under each phrase of literary composition, the particular sentiment out of which the ornament, the stroke, and the phrase have sprung; he is a spectator of the inward drama which has developed itself in the breast of the artist or writer; the choice of words, the length or shortness of the period, the species of metaphor, the accent of a verse, the chain of reasoning—all are to him an indication; while his eyes are reading the text his mind and soul are following the steady flow and ever-chang-

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ing series of emotions and conceptions from which this text has issued; he is working out its psychology. Should you desire to study this operation, regard the promoter and model of all the high culture of the epoch, Goethe, who, before composing his "Iphigenia" spent days in making drawings of the most perfect statues and who, at last, his eyes filled with the noble forms of antique scenery and his mind penetrated by the harmonious beauty of antique life, succeeded in reproducing internally, with such exactness, the habits and yearnings of Greek imagination as to provide us with an almost twin sister of the "Antigone" of Sophocles and of the goddesses of Phidias. This exact and demonstrated divination of bygone sentiments has, in our days, given a new life to history. There was almost complete ignorance of this in the last century; men of every race and of every epoch were represented as about alike, the Greek, the barbarian, the Hindoo, the man of the Renaissance and the man of the eighteenth century, cast in the same mold and after the same pattern, and after a certain abstract conception which served for the whole human species. There was a knowledge of man but not of men. There was no penetration into the soul itself; nothing of the infinite diversity and wonderful complexity of souls had been detected; it was not known that the moral organization of a people or of an age is as special and distinct as the physical structure of a family of plants or of an order of animals. History to-day, like zoölogy, has found its anatomy, and whatever branch of it is studied, whether philology, languages or mythologies, it is in this way that labor must be given to make it produce new fruit. Among so many writers who, since Herder, Ottfried Müller, and Goethe have steadily followed and rectified this great effort, let the reader take two historians and two works, one "The Life and Letters of Cromwell" by Carlyle, and the other the "Port Royal" of Sainte-Beuve. He will see how precisely, how clearly, and how profoundly we detect the soul of a man beneath his actions and works; how, under an old general and in place of an ambitious man vulgarly hypocritical, we find one tormented by the disordered reveries of a gloomy imagination, but practical in instinct and faculties, thoroughly English and strange and incomprehensible to whoever has not studied the climate and the race; how, with about a hundred scattered letters and a dozen or more mutilated speeches, we fol-

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low him from his farm and his team to his general's tent and to his Protector's throne, in his transformation and in his development, in his struggles of conscience and in his statesman's resolutions, in such a way that the mechanism of his thought and action becomes visible and the ever renewed and fitful tragedy, within which racked this great gloomy soul, passes like the tragedies of Shakespeare into the souls of those who behold them. We see how, behind convent disputes and the obstinacy of nuns, we recover one of the great provinces of human psychology; how fifty or more characters, rendered invisible through the uniformity of a narration careful of the properties, come forth in full daylight, each standing out clear in its countless diversites; how, underneath theological dissertations and monotonous sermons, we discern the throbbings of ever-breathing hearts, the excitements and depressions of the religious life, the unforeseen reaction and pell-mell stir of natural feeling, the infiltrations of surrounding society, the intermittent triumphs of grace, presenting so many shades of difference that the fullest description and most flexible style can scarcely garner in the vast harvest which the critic has caused to germinate in this abandoned field. And the same elsewhere. Germany, with its genius, so pliant, so broad, so prompt in transformations, so fitted for the reproduction of the remotest and strangest states of human thought; England, with its matter-of-fact mind, so suited to the grappling with moral problems, to making them clear by figures, weights, and measures, by geography and statistics, by texts and common sense; France, at length, with its Parisian culture and drawing-room habits, with its unceasing analysis of characters and of works, with its ever ready irony at detecting weaknesses, with its skilled finesse in discriminating shades of thought—all have ploughed over the same ground, and we now begin to comprehend that no region of history exists in which this deep sub-soil should not be reached if we would secure adequate crops between the furrows.

Such is the second step, and we are now in train to follow it out. Such is the proper aim of contemporary criticism. No one has done this work so judiciously and on so grand a scale as Sainte-Beuve; in this respect, we are all his pupils; literary, philosophic, and religious criticism in books, and even in the newspapers, is to-day entirely changed by his method. Ulterior

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evolution must start from this point. I have often attempted to expose what this evolution is; in my opinion, it is a new road open to history and which I shall strive to describe more in detail.

III

After having observed in a man and noted down one, two, three, and then a multitude of, sentiments, do these suffice and does your knowledge of him seem complete? Does a memorandum book constitute a psychology? It is not a psychology, and here, as elsewhere, the search for causes must follow the collection of facts. It matters not what the facts may be, whether physical or moral, they always spring from causes; there are causes for ambition, for courage, for veracity, as well as for digestion, for muscular action, and for animal heat. Vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar; every complex fact grows out of the simple facts with which it is affiliated and on which it depends. We must therefore try to ascertain what simple facts underlie moral qualities the same as we ascertain those that underlie physical qualities, and, for example, let us take the first fact that comes to hand, a religious system of music, that of a Protestant church. A certain inward cause has inclined the minds of worshippers towards these grave, monotonous melodies, a cause much greater than its effect; that is to say, a general conception of the veritable outward forms of worship which man owes to God; it is this general conception which has shaped the architecture of the temple, cast out statues, dispensed with paintings, effaced ornaments, shortened ceremonies, confined the members of a congregation to high pews which cut off the view, and governed the thousand details of decoration, posture, and all other externals. This conception itself again proceeds from a more general cause, an idea of human conduct in general, inward and outward, prayers, actions, dispositions of every sort that man is bound to maintain toward the Deity; it is this which has enthroned the doctrine of grace, lessened the importance of the clergy, transformed the sacraments, suppressed observances, and changed the religion of discipline into one of morality. This conception, in its turn, depends on a third one, still more general, that of moral perfection as this is

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found in a perfect God, the impeccable judge, the stern overseer, who regards every soul as sinful, meriting punishment, incapable of virtue or of salvation, except through a stricken conscience which He provokes and the renewal of the heart which He brings about. Here is the master conception, consisting of duty erected into the absolute sovereign of human life, and which prostrates all other ideals at the feet of the moral ideal. Here we reach what is deepest in man; for, to explain this conception, we must consider the race he belongs to, say the German, the Northman, the formation and character of his intellect, his ways in general of thinking and feeling, that tardiness and frigidity of sensation which keeps him from rashly and easily falling under the empire of sensual enjoyments, that bluntness of taste, that irregularity and those outbursts of conception which arrest in him the birth of refined and harmonious forms and methods; that disdain of appearances, that yearning for truth, that attachment to abstract, bare ideas which develop conscience in him at the expense of everything else. Here the search comes to an end. We have reached a certain primitive disposition, a particular trait belonging to sensations of all kinds, to every conception peculiar to an age or to a race, to characteristics inseparable from every idea and feeling that stir in the human breast. Such are the grand causes, for these are universal and permanent causes, present in every case and at every moment, everywhere and always active, indestructible, and inevitably dominant in the end, since, whatever accidents cross their path, being limited and partial, end in yielding to the obscure and incessant repetition of their energy; so that the general structure of things and all the main features of events are their work, all religions and philosophies, all poetic and industrial systems, all forms of society and of the family, all, in fine, being imprints bearing the stamp of their seal.

IV

There is, then, a system in human ideas and sentiments, the prime motor of which consists in general traits, certain characteristics of thought and feeling common to men belonging to a particular race, epoch, or country. Just as crystals in mineralogy, whatever their diversity, proceed from a few simple

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physical forms, so do civilizations in history, however these may differ, proceed from a few spiritual forms. One is explained by a primitive geometrical element as the other is explained by a primitive psychological element. In order to comprehend the entire group of mineralogical species we must first study a regular solid in the general, its facets and angles, and observe in this abridged form the innumerable transformations of which it is susceptible. In like manner, if we would comprehend the entire group of historic varieties we must consider beforehand a human soul in the general, with its two or three fundamental faculties, and, in this abridgment, observe the principal forms it may present. This sort of ideal tableau, the geometrical as well as psychological, is not very complex, and we soon detect the limitations of organic conditions to which civilizations, the same as crystals, are forcibly confined. What do we find in man at the point of departure? Images or representations of objects, namely, that which floats before him internally, lasts a certain time, is effaced, and then returns after contemplating this or that tree or animal, in short, some sensible object. This forms the material basis of the rest and the development of this material basis is twofold, speculative or positive, just as these representations end in a general conception or in an active resolution. Such is man, summarily abridged. It is here, within these narrow confines, that human diversities are encountered, now in the matter itself and again in the primordial twofold development. However insignificant in the elements they are of vast significance in the mass, while the slightest change in the factors leads to gigantic changes in the results. According as the representation is distinct, as if stamped by a coining-press, or confused and blurred; according as it concentrates in itself a larger or smaller number of the characters of an object; according as it is violent and accompanied with impulsions or tranquil and surrounded with calmness, so are all the operations and the whole running-gear of the human machine entirely transformed. In like manner again, according as the ulterior development of the representation varies, so does the whole development of the man vary. If the general conception in which this ends is merely a dry notation in Chinese fashion, language becomes a kind of algebra, religion and poetry are reduced to a minimum, philosophy is brought down to a sort of moral and practical common sense,

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science to a collection of recipes, classifications, and utilitarian mnemonics, the mind itself taking a wholly positive turn. If, on the contrary, the general conception in which the representation culminates is a poetic and figurative creation, a living symbol, as with the Aryan races, language becomes a sort of shaded and tinted epic in which each word stands as a personage, poesy and religion assume magnificent and inexhaustible richness, and metaphysics develops with breadth and subtlety without any consideration of positive bearings; the whole intellect, notwithstanding the deviation and inevitable weaknesses of the effort, is captivated by the beautiful and sublime, thus conceiving an ideal type which, through its nobleness and harmony, gathers to itself all the affections and enthusiasms of humanity. If, on the other hand, the general conception in which the representation culminates is poetic but abrupt, is reached not gradually but by sudden intuition, if the original operation is not a regular development but a violent explosion—then, as with the Semitic races, metaphysical power is wanting; the religious conception becomes that of a royal God, consuming and solitary; science cannot take shape, the intellect grows rigid and too headstrong to reproduce the delicate ordering of nature; poetry cannot give birth to aught but a series of vehement, grandiose exclamations, while language no longer renders the concatenation of reasoning and eloquence, man being reduced to lyric enthusiasm, to ungovernable passion, and to narrow and fanatical action. It is in this interval between the particular representation and the universal conception that the germs of the greatest human differences are found. Some races, like the classic, for example, pass from the former to the latter by a graduated scale of ideas regularly classified and more and more general; others, like the Germanic, traverse the interval in leaps, with uniformity and after prolonged and uncertain groping. Others, like the Romans and the English, stop at the lowest stages; others, like the Hindoos and Germans, mount to the uppermost. If, now, after considering the passage from the representation to the idea, we regard the passage from the representation to the resolution, we find here elementary differences of like importance and of the same order, according as the impression is vivid, as in Southern climes, or faint, as in Northern climes, as it ends in instantaneous action as with barbarians, or tardily as with civilized

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nations, as it is capable or not of growth, of inequality, of persistence and of association. The entire system of human passion, all the risks of public peace and security, all labor and action, spring from these sources. It is the same with the other primordial differences; their effects embrace an entire civilization, and may be likened to those algebraic formulæ which, within narrow bounds, describe beforehand the curve of which these form the law. Not that this law always prevails to the end; sometimes, perturbations arise, but, even when this happens, it is not because the law is defective, but because it has not operated alone. New elements have entered into combination with old ones; powerful foreign forces have interfered to oppose primitive forces. The race has emigrated, as with the ancient Aryans, and the change of climate has led to a change in the whole intellectual economy and structure of society. A people has been conquered like the Saxon nation, and the new political structure has imposed on it customs, capacities, and desires which it did not possess. The nation has established itself permanently in the midst of downtrodden and threatening subjects, as with the ancient Spartans, while the necessity of living, as in an armed encampment, has violently turned the whole moral and social organization in one unique direction. At all events, the mechanism of human history is like this. We always find the primitive mainspring consisting of some widespread tendency of soul and intellect, either innate and natural to the race or acquired by it and due to some circumstance forced upon it. These great given mainsprings gradually produce their effects, that is to say, at the end of a few centuries they place the nation in a new religious, literary, social, and economic state; a new condition which, combined with their renewed effort, produces another condition, sometimes a good one, sometimes a bad one, now slowly, now rapidly, and so on; so that the entire development of each distinct civilization may be considered as the effect of one permanent force which, at every moment, varies its work by modifying the circumstances where it acts.

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V

Three different sources contribute to the production of this elementary moral state, race, environment, and epoch. What we call race consists of those innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him into the world and which are generally accompanied with marked differences of temperament and of bodily structure. They vary in different nations. Naturally, there are varieties of men as there are varieties of cattle and horses, some brave and intelligent, and others timid and of limited capacity; some capable of superior conceptions and creations, and others reduced to rudimentary ideas and contrivances; some specially fitted for certain works, and more richly furnished with certain instincts, as we see in the better endowed species of dogs, some for running and others for fighting, some for hunting and others for guarding houses and flocks. We have here a distinct force; so distinct that, in spite of the enormous deviations which both the other motors impress upon it, we still recognize, and which a race like the Aryan people, scattered from the Ganges to the Hebrides, established under all climates, ranged along every degree of civilization, transformed by thirty centuries of revolutions, shows nevertheless in its languages, in its religions, in its literatures, and in its philosophies, the community of blood and of intellect which still to-day binds together all its offshoots. However they may differ, their parentage is not lost; barbarism, culture and grafting, differences of atmosphere and of soil, fortunate or unfortunate occurrences, have operated in vain; the grand characteristics of the original form have lasted, and we find that the two or three leading features of the primitive imprint are again apparent under the subsequent imprints with which time has overlaid them. There is nothing surprising in this extraordinary tenacity. Although the immensity of the distance allows us to catch only a glimpse in a dubious light of the origin of species,[1] the events of history throw sufficient light on events anterior to history to explain the almost unshaken solidity of primordial traits. At the moment of encountering them, fifteen, twenty, and thirty centuries before our era, in an Aryan, Egyptian, or Chinese, they represent the

[1] Darwin, "The Origin of Species." Prosper Lucas, "De l'Hérédité."

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work of a much greater number of centuries, perhaps the work of many myriads of centuries. For, as soon as an animal is born it must adapt itself to its surroundings; it breathes in another way, it renews itself differently, it is otherwise stimulated according as the atmosphere, the food, and the temperature are different. A different climate and situation create different necessities and hence activities of a different kind; and hence, again, a system of different habits, and, finally a system of different aptitudes and instincts. Man, thus compelled to put himself in equilibrium with circumstances, contracts a corresponding temperament and character, and his character, like his temperament, are acquisitions all the more stable because of the outward impression being more deeply imprinted in him by more frequent repetitions and transmitted to his offspring by more ancient heredity. So that at each moment of time, the character of a people may be considered as a summary of all antecedent actions and sensations; that is to say, as a quantity and as a weighty mass, not infinite,[2] since all things in nature are limited, but disproportionate to the rest and almost impossible to raise, since each minute of an almost infinite past has contributed to render it heavier, and, in order to turn the scale, it would require, on the other side, a still greater accumulation of actions and sensations. Such is the first and most abundant source of these master faculties from which historic events are derived; and we see at once that if it is powerful it is owing to its not being a mere source, but a sort of lake, and like a deep reservoir wherein other sources have poured their waters for a multitude of centuries.

When we have thus verified the internal structure of a race we must consider the environment in which it lives. For man is not alone in the world; nature envelops him and other men surround him; accidental and secondary folds come and overspread the primitive and permanent fold, while physical or social circumstances derange or complete the natural groundwork surrendered to them. At one time climate has had its effect. Although the history of Aryan nations can be only obscurely traced from their common country to their final abodes, we can nevertheless affirm that the profound difference which is apparent between the Germanic races on the one hand, and the Hellenic and Latin races on the other, proceeds in great part from the differ-

[2] Spinoza, "Ethics," part iv., axiom.

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ences between the countries in which they have established themselves—the former in cold and moist countries, in the depths of gloomy forests and swamps, or on the borders of a wild ocean, confined to melancholic or rude sensations, inclined to drunkenness and gross feeding, leading a militant and carnivorous life; the latter, on the contrary, living amidst the finest scenery, alongside of a brilliant, sparkling sea inviting navigation and commerce, exempt from the grosser cravings of the stomach, disposed at the start to social habits and customs, to political organization, to the sentiments and faculties which develop the art of speaking, the capacity for enjoyment and invention in the sciences, in art, and in literature. At another time, political events have operated, as in the two Italian civilizations: the first one tending wholly to action, to conquest, to government, and to legislation, through the primitive situation of a city of refuge, a frontier emporium, and of an armed aristocracy which, importing and enrolling foreigners and the vanquished under it, sets two hostile bodies facing each other, with no outlet for its internal troubles and rapacious instincts but systematic warfare; the second one, excluded from unity and political ambition on a grand scale by the permanency of its municipal system, by the cosmopolite situation of its pope and by the military intervention of neighboring states, and following the bent of its magnificent and harmonious genius, is wholly carried over to the worship of voluptuousness and beauty. Finally, at another time, social conditions have imposed their stamp as, eighteen centuries ago, by Christianity, and twenty-five centuries ago by Buddhism, when, around the Mediterranean as in Hindostan, the extreme effects of Aryan conquest and organization led to intolerable oppression, the crushing of the individual, utter despair, the whole world under the ban of a curse, with the development of metaphysics and visions, until man, in this dungeon of despondency, feeling his heart melt, conceived of abnegation, charity, tender love, gentleness, humility, human brotherhood, here in the idea of universal nothingness, and there under that of the fatherhood of God. Look around at the regulative instincts and faculties implanted in a race; in brief, the turn of mind according to which it thinks and acts at the present day; we shall find most frequently that its work is due to one of these prolonged situations, to these enveloping circumstances, to these persistent gigantic

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pressures brought to bear on a mass of men who, one by one, and all collectively, from one generation to another, have been unceasingly bent and fashioned by them, in Spain a crusade of eight centuries against the Mohammedans, prolonged yet longer even to the exhaustion of the nation through the expulsion of the Moors, through the spoliation of the Jews, through the establishment of the Inquisition, through the Catholic wars; in England, a political establishment of eight centuries which maintains man erect and respectful, independent and obedient, all accustomed to struggling together in a body under the sanction of law; in France, a Latin organization which, at first imposed on docile barbarians, then levelled to the ground under the universal demolition, forms itself anew under the latent workings of national instinct, developing under hereditary monarchs and ending in a sort of equalized, centralized, administrative republic under dynasties exposed to revolutions. Such are the most efficacious among the observable causes which mold the primitive man; they are to nations what education, pursuit, condition, and abode are to individuals, and seem to comprise all, since the external forces which fashion human matter, and by which the outward acts on the inward, are comprehended in them.

There is, nevertheless, a third order of causes, for, with the forces within and without, there is the work these have already produced together, which work itself contributes towards producing the ensuing work; beside the permanent impulsion and the given environment there is the acquired momentum. When national character and surrounding circumstances operate it is not on a *tabula rasa*, but on one already bearing imprints. According as this *tabula* is taken at one or at another moment so is the imprint different, and this suffices to render the total effect different. Consider, for example, two moments of a literature or of an art, French tragedy under Corneille and under Voltaire, and Greek drama under Æschylus and under Euripides, Latin poetry under Lucretius and under Claudian, and Italian painting under Da Vinci and under Guido. Assuredly, there is no change of general conception at either of these two extreme points; ever the same human type must be portrayed or represented in action; the cast of the verse, the dramatic structure, the physical form have all persisted. But there is this among these differences, that one of the artists is a precursor and the

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other a successor, that the first one has no model and the second one has a model; that the former sees things face to face, and that the latter sees them through the intermediation of the former, that many departments of art have become more perfect, that the simplicity and grandeur of the impression have diminished, that what is pleasing and refined in form has augmented—in short, that the first work has determined the second. In this respect, it is with a people as with a plant; the same sap at the same temperature and in the same soil produces, at different stages of its successive elaborations, different developments, buds, flowers, fruits, and seeds, in such a way that the condition of the following is always that of the preceding and is born of its death. Now, if you no longer regard a brief moment, as above, but one of those grand periods of development which embraces one or many centuries like the Middle Ages, or our last classic period, the conclusion is the same. A certain dominating conception has prevailed throughout; mankind, during two hundred years, during five hundred years, have represented to themselves a certain ideal figure of man, in mediæval times the knight and the monk, in our classic period the courtier and refined talker; this creative and universal conception has monopolized the entire field of action and thought, and, after spreading its involuntarily systematic works over the world, it languished and then died out, and now a new idea has arisen, destined to a like domination and to equally multiplied creations. Note here that the latter depends in part on the former, and that it is the former, which, combining its effect with those of national genius and surrounding circumstances, will impose their bent and their direction on new-born things. It is according to this law that great historic currents are formed, meaning by this, the long rule of a form of intellect or of a master idea, like that period of spontaneous creations called the Renaissance, or that period of oratorical classifications called the Classic Age, or that series of mystic systems called the Alexandrine and Christian epoch, or that series of mythological efflorescences found at the origins of Germany, India, and Greece. Here as elsewhere, we are dealing merely with a mechanical problem: the total effect is a compound wholly determined by the grandeur and direction of the forces which produce it. The sole difference which separates these moral problems from physical problems lies in this, that

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in the former the directions and grandeur cannot be estimated by or stated in figures with the same precision as in the latter. If a want, a faculty, is a quantity capable of degrees, the same as pressure or weight, this quantity is not measurable like that of the pressure or weight. We cannot fix it in an exact or approximative formula; we can obtain or give of it only a literary impression; we are reduced to noting and citing the prominent facts which make it manifest and which nearly, or roughly, indicate about what grade on the scale it must be ranged at. And yet, notwithstanding the methods of notation are not the same in the moral sciences as in the physical sciences, nevertheless, as matter is the same in both, and is equally composed of forces, directions and magnitudes, we can still show that in one as in the other, the final effect takes place according to the same law. This is great or small, according as the fundamental forces are great or small and act more or less precisely in the same sense, according as the distinct effects of race, environment and epoch combine to enforce each other or combine to neutralize each other. Thus are explained the long impotences and the brilliant successes which appear irregularly and with no apparent reason in the life of a people; the causes of these consist in internal concordances and contrarieties. There was one of these concordances when, in the seventeenth century, the social disposition and conversational spirit innate in France encountered drawing-room formalities and the moment of oratorical analysis; when, in the nineteenth century, the flexible, profound genius of Germany encountered the age of philosophic synthesis and of cosmopolite criticism. One of these contrarieties happened when, in the seventeenth century, the blunt, isolated genius of England awkwardly tried to don the new polish of urbanity, and when, in the sixteenth century, the lucid, prosaic French intellect tried to gestate a living poesy. It is this secret concordance of creative forces which produced the exquisite courtesy and noble cast of literature under Louis XIV and Bossuet, and the grandiose metaphysics and broad critical sympathy under Hegel and Goethe. It is this secret contrariety of creative forces which produced the literary incompleteness, the licentious plays, the abortive drama of Dryden and Wycherly, the poor Greek importations, the gropings, the minute beauties and fragments of Ronsard and the Pleiad. We may confidently affirm that the

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unknown creations toward which the current of coming ages is bearing us will spring from and be governed by these primordial forces; that, if these forces could be measured and computed we might deduce from them, as from a formula, the characters of future civilization; and that if, notwithstanding the evident rudeness of our notations, and the fundamental inexactitude of our measures, we would nowadays form some idea of our general destinies, we must base our conjectures on an examination of these forces. For, in enumerating them, we run through the full circle of active forces; and when the race, the environment, and the moment have been considered—that is to say the inner mainspring, the pressure from without, and the impulsion already acquired—we have exhausted not only all real causes but again all possible causes of movement.

VI

There remains to be ascertained in what way these causes, applied to a nation or to a century, distribute their effects. Like a spring issuing from an elevated spot and diffusing its waters, according to the height, from ledge to ledge, until it finally reaches the low ground, so does the tendency of mind or of soul in a people, due to race, epoch, or environment, diffuse itself in different proportions, and by regular descent, over the different series of facts which compose its civilization.[3] In preparing the geographical map of a country, starting at its watershed, we see the slopes, just below this common point, dividing themselves into five or six principal basins, and then each of the latter into several others, and so on until the whole country, with its thousands of inequalities of surface, is included in the ramifications of this network. In like manner, in preparing the psychological map of the events and sentiments belonging to a certain human civilization, we find at the start five or six well determined provinces—religion, art, philosophy, the state, the family, and industries; next, in each of these provinces, natural departments, and then finally, in each of these departments, still smaller territories

[3] For this scale of coördinate effects consult, "Langues Sémitiques," by Renan, ch. 1; "Comparison des civilisations Grecque et Romaine," vol. i., ch. i., 3d ed., by Mommsen; "Conséquences de la démocratie," vol. iii., by De Tocqueville.

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until we arrive at those countless details of life which we observe daily in ourselves and around us. If, again, we examine and compare together these various groups of facts we at once find that they are composed of parts and that all have parts in common. Let us take first the three principal products of human intelligence—religion, art, and philosophy. What is a philosophy but a conception of nature and of its primordial causes under the form of abstractions and formulas? What underlies a religion and an art if not a conception of this same nature, and of these same primordial causes, under the form of more or less determinate symbols, and of more or less distinct personages, with this difference, that in the first case we believe that they exist, and in the second case that they do not exist. Let the reader consider some of the great creations of the intellect in India, in Scandinavia, in Persia, in Rome, in Greece, and he will find that art everywhere is a sort of philosophy become sensible, religion a sort of poem regarded as true, and philosophy a sort of art and religion, dessicated and reduced to pure abstractions. There is, then, in the centre of each of these groups a common element, the conception of the world and its origin, and if they differ amongst each other it is because each combines with the common element a distinct element; here the power of abstraction, there the faculty of personifying with belief, and, finally, the talent for personifying without belief. Let us now take the two leading products of human association, the Family and the State. What constitutes the State other than the sentiment of obedience by which a multitude of men collect together under the authority of a chief? And what constitutes the Family other than the sentiment of obedience by which a wife and children act together under the direction of a father and husband? The Family is a natural, primitive, limited state, as the State is an artificial, ulterior, and expanded Family, while beneath the differences which arise from the number, origin, and condition of its members, we distinguish, in the small as in the large community, a like fundamental disposition of mind which brings them together and unites them. Suppose, now, that this common element receives from the environment, the epoch, and the race peculiar characteristics, and it is clear that all the groups into which it enters will be proportionately modified. If the sentiment of

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obedience is merely one of fear,[4] you encounter, as in most of the Oriental states, the brutality of despotism, a prodigality of vigorous punishments, the exploitation of the subject, servile habits, insecurity of property, impoverished production, female slavery, and the customs of the harem. If the sentiment of obedience is rooted in the instinct of discipline, sociability, and honor, you find, as in France, a complete military organization, a superb administrative hierarchy, a weak public spirit with outbursts of patriotism, the unhesitating docility of the subject along with the hotheadedness of the revolutionist, the obsequiousness of the courtier along with the reverse of the gentleman, the charm of refined conversation along with home and family bickerings, conjugal equality together with matrimonial incompatibilities under the necessary constraints of the law. If, finally, the sentiment of obedience is rooted in the instinct of subordination and in the idea of duty, you perceive, as in Germanic nations, the security and contentment of the household, the firm foundations of domestic life, the slow and imperfect development of worldly matters, innate respect for established rank, superstitious reverence for the past, maintenance of social inequalities, natural and habitual deference to the law. Similarly in a race, just as there is a difference of aptitude for general ideas, so will its religion, art, and philosophy be different. If man is naturally fitted for broader universal conceptions and inclined at the same time to their derangement, through the nervous irritability of an overexcited organization, we find, as in India, a surprising richness of gigantic religious creations, a splendid bloom of extravagant transparent epics, a strange concatenation of subtle, imaginative philosophic systems, all so intimately associated and so interpenetrated with a common sap, that we at once recognize them, by their amplitude, by their color, and by their disorder, as productions of the same climate and of the same spirit. If, on the contrary, the naturally sound and well-balanced man is content to restrict his conceptions to narrow bounds in order to cast them in more precise forms, we see, as in Greece, a theology of artists and narrators, special gods that are soon separated from objects and almost transformed at once into substantial personages, the sentiment of universal unity nearly effaced and

[4] "L'Esprit des Lois," by Montesquieu; the essential principles of the three governments.

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scarcely maintained in the vague notion of destiny, a philosophy, rather than subtle and compact, grandiose and systematic, narrow metaphysically [5] but incomparable in its logic, sophistry, and morality, a poesy and arts superior to anything we have seen in lucidity, naturalness, proportion, truth, and beauty. If, finally, man is reduced to narrow conceptions deprived of any speculative subtlety, and at the same time finds that he is absorbed and completely hardened by practical interests, we see, as in Rome, rudimentary deities, mere empty names, good for denoting the petty details of agriculture, generation, and the household, veritable marriage and farming labels, and, therefore, a null or borrowed mythology, philosophy, and poesy. Here, as elsewhere, comes in the law of mutual dependencies.[6] A civilization is a living unit, the parts of which hold together the same as the parts of an organic body. Just as in an animal, the instincts, teeth, limbs, bones, and muscular apparatus are bound together in such a way that a variation of one determines a corresponding variation in the others, and out of which a skilful naturalist, with a few bits, imagines and reconstructs an almost complete body, so, in a civilization, do religion, philosophy, the family scheme, literature and the arts form a system in which each local change involves a general change, so that an experienced historian, who studies one portion apart from the others, sees beforehand and partially predicts the characteristics of the rest. There is nothing vague in this dependence. The regulation of all this in the living body consists, first, of the tendency to manifest a certain primordial type, and, next, the necessity of its possessing organs which can supply its wants and put itself in harmony with itself in order to live. The regulation in a civilization consists in the presence in each great human creation of an elementary productor equally present in other surrounding creations, that is, some faculty and aptitude, some efficient and marked disposition, which, with its own peculiar character, introduces this with that into all operations in which it takes part, and which, according to its variations, causes variation in all the works in which it coöperates.

[5] The birth of the Alexandrine philosophy is due to contact with the Orient. Aristotle's metaphysical views stand alone. Moreover, with him as with Plato, they afford merely a glimpse. By way of contrast see systematic power in Plotinus, Proclus, Schelling, and Hegel, or again in the admirable boldness of Brahmanic and Buddhist speculation.

[6] I have very often made attempts to state this law, especially in the preface to "Essais de Critique et d'Histoire."

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VII

Having reached this point, we can obtain a glimpse of the principal features of human transformation, and can now search for the general laws which regulate not only events, but classes of events; not only this religion or that literature, but the whole group of religions or of literatures. If, for example, it is admitted that a religion is a metaphysical poem associated with belief; if it is recognized, besides, that there are certain races and certain environments in which belief, poetic faculty, and metaphysical faculty display themselves in common with unwonted vigor; if we consider that Christianity and Buddhism were developed at periods of grand systematizations and in the midst of sufferings like the oppression which stirred up the fanatics of Cevennes; if, on the other hand, it is recognized that primitive religions are born at the dawn of human reason, during the richest expansion of human imagination, at times of the greatest *naïveté* and of the greatest credulity; if we consider, again, that Mohammedanism appeared along with the advent of poetic prose and of the conception of material unity, amongst a people destitute of science and at the moment of a sudden development of the intellect—we might conclude that religion is born and declines, is reformed and transformed, according as circumstances fortify and bring together, with more or less precision and energy, its three generative instincts; and we would then comprehend why religion is endemic in India among specially exalted imaginative and philosophic intellects; why it blooms out so wonderfully and so grandly in the Middle Ages, in an oppressive society, amongst new languages and literatures; why it develops again in the sixteenth century with a new character and an heroic enthusiasm, at the time of an universal renaissance and at the awakening of the Germanic races; why it swarms out in so many bizarre sects in the rude democracy of America and under the bureaucratic despotism of Russia; why, in fine, it is seen spreading out in the Europe of to-day in such different proportions and with such special traits, according to such differences of race and of civilizations. And so for every kind of human production, for letters, music, the arts of design, philosophy, the sciences, state industries, and the rest. Each has

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some moral tendency for its direct cause, or a concurrence of moral tendencies; given the cause, it appears; the cause withdrawn, it disappears; the weakness or intensity of the cause is the measure of its own weakness or intensity. It is bound to that like any physical phenomenon to its condition, like dew to the chilliness of a surrounding atmosphere, like dilatation to heat. Couples exist in the moral world as they exist in the physical world, as rigorously linked together and as universally diffused. Whatever in one case produces, alters, or suppresses the first term, produces, alters, and suppresses the second term as a necessary consequence. Whatever cools the surrounding atmosphere causes the fall of dew. Whatever develops credulity, along with poetic conceptions of the universe, engenders religion. Thus have things come about, and thus will they continue to come about. As soon as the adequate and necessary condition of one of these vast apparitions becomes known to us our mind has a hold on the future as well as on the past. We can confidently state under what circumstances it will reappear, foretell without rashness many portions of its future history, and sketch with precaution some of the traits of its ulterior development.

VIII

History has reached this point at the present day, or rather it is nearly there, on the threshold of this inquest. The question as now stated is this: Given a literature, a philosophy, a society, an art, a certain group of arts, what is the moral state of things which produces it? And what are the conditions of race, epoch, and environment the best adapted to produce this moral state? There is a distinct moral state for each of these formations and for each of their branches; there is one for art in general as well as for each particular art; for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and poetry, each with a germ of its own in the large field of human psychology; each has its own law, and it is by virtue of this law that we see each shoot up, apparently haphazard, singly and alone, amidst the miscarriages of their neighbors, like painting in Flanders and Holland in the seventeenth century, like poetry in England in the sixteenth century, like music in Germany in the eighteenth century. At this moment, and in

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these countries, the conditions for one art and not for the others are fulfilled, and one branch only has bloomed out amidst the general sterility. It is these laws of human vegetation which history must now search for; it is this special psychology of each special formation which must be got at; it is the composition of a complete table of these peculiar conditions that must now be worked out. There is nothing more delicate and nothing more difficult. Montesquieu undertook it, but in his day the interest in history was too recent for him to be successful; nobody, indeed, had any idea of the road that was to be followed, and even at the present day we scarcely begin to obtain a glimpse of it. Just as astronomy, at bottom, is a mechanical problem, and physiology, likewise, a chemical problem, so is history, at bottom, a problem of psychology. There is a particular system of inner impressions and operations which fashions the artist, the believer, the musician, the painter, the nomad, the social man; for each of these, the filiation, intensity, and interdependence of ideas and of emotions are different; each has his own moral history, and his own special organization, along with some master tendency and with some dominant trait. To explain each of these would require a chapter devoted to a profound internal analysis, and that is a work that can scarcely be called sketched out at the present day. But one man, Stendhal, through a certain turn of mind and a peculiar education, has attempted it, and even yet most of his readers find his works paradoxical and obscure. His talent and ideas were too premature. His admirable insight, his profound sayings carelessly thrown out, the astonishing precision of his notes and logic, were not understood; people were not aware that, under the appearances and talk of a man of the world, he explained the most complex of internal mechanisms; that his finger touched the great mainspring, that he brought scientific processes to bear in the history of the heart, the art of employing figures, of decomposing, of deducing; that he was the first to point out fundamental causes such as nationalities, climates, and temperaments; in short, that he treated sentiments as they should be treated, that is to say, as a naturalist and physicist, by making classifications and estimating forces. On account of all this he was pronounced dry and eccentric and allowed to live in isolation, composing novels, books of travel and taking notes, for which he counted upon, and has

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obtained, about a dozen or so of readers. And yet his works are those in which we of the present day may find the most satisfactory efforts that have been made to clear the road I have just striven to describe. Nobody has taught one better how to observe with one's own eyes, first, to regard humanity around us and life as it is, and next, old and authentic documents; how to read more than merely the black and white of the page; how to detect under old print and the scrawl of the text the veritable sentiment and the train of thought, the mental state in which the words were penned. In his writings, as in those of Sainte-Beuve and in those of the German critics, the reader will find how much is to be derived from a literary document; if this document is rich and we know how to interpret it, we will find in it the psychology of a particular soul, often that of an age, and sometimes that of a race. In this respect, a great poem, a good novel, the confessions of a superior man, are more instructive than a mass of historians and histories; I would give fifty volumes of charters and a hundred diplomatic files for the memoirs of Cellini, the epistles of Saint Paul, the table-talk of Luther, or the comedies of Aristophanes. Herein lies the value of literary productions. They are instructive because they are beautiful; their usefulness increases with their perfection; and if they provide us with documents, it is because they are monuments. The more visible a book renders sentiments the more literary it is, for it is the special office of literature to take note of sentiments. The more important the sentiments noted in a book the higher its rank in literature, for it is by representing what sort of a life a nation or an epoch leads, that a writer rallies to himself the sympathies of a nation or of an epoch. Hence, among the documents which bring before our eyes the sentiments of preceding generations, a literature, and especially a great literature, is incomparably the best. It resembles those admirable instruments of remarkable sensitiveness which physicists make use of to detect and measure the most profound and delicate changes that occur in a human body. There is nothing approaching this in constitutions or religions; the articles of a code or of a catechism do no more than depict mind in gross and without finesse; if there are documents which show life and spirit in politics and in creeds, they are the eloquent discourses of the pulpit and the tribune, memoirs and personal confessions, all belonging to liter-

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ature, so that, outside of itself, literature embodies whatever is good elsewhere. It is mainly in studying literatures that we are able to produce moral history, and arrive at some knowledge of the psychological laws on which events depend.

I have undertaken to write a history of a literature and to ascertain the psychology of a people; in selecting this one, it is not without a motive. A people had to be taken possessing a vast and complete literature, which is rarely found. There are few nations which, throughout their existence, have thought and written well in the full sense of the word. Among the ancients, Latin literature is null at the beginning, and afterward borrowed and an imitation. Among the moderns, German literature is nearly a blank for two centuries.[1] Italian and Spanish literatures come to an end in the middle of the seventeenth century. Ancient Greece, and modern France and England, alone offer a complete series of great and expressive monuments. I have chosen the English because, as this still exists and is open to direct observation, it can be better studied than that of an extinct civilization of which fragments only remain; and because, being different, it offers better than that of France very marked characteristics in the eyes of a Frenchman. Moreover, outside of what is peculiar to English civilization, apart from a spontaneous development, it presents a forced deviation due to the latest and most effective conquest to which the country was subject; the three given conditions out of which it issues—race, climate, and the Norman conquest—are clearly and distinctly visible in its literary monuments; so that we study in this history the two most potent motors of human transformation, namely, nature and constraint, and we study them, without any break or uncertainty, in a series of authentic and complete monuments. I have tried to define these primitive motors, to show their gradual effects, and explain how their insensible operation has brought religions and literary productions into full light, and how the inward mechanism is developed by which the barbarous Saxon became the Englishman of the present day.

[1] From 1550 to 1750.

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BOOK I.—THE SOURCE

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CHAPTER FIRST

THE SAXONS

Section I.—The Coast of the North Sea

AS you coast the North Sea from the Scheldt to Jutland, you will mark in the first place that the characteristic feature is the want of slope; marsh, waste, shoal; the rivers hardly drag themselves along, swollen and sluggish, with long, black-looking waves; the flooding stream oozes over the banks, and appears further on in stagnant pools. In Holland the soil is but a sediment of mud; here and there only does the earth cover it with a crust, shallow and brittle, the mere alluvium of the river, which the river seems ever about to destroy. Thick clouds hover above, being fed by ceaseless exhalations. They lazily turn their violet flanks, grow black, suddenly descend in heavy showers; the vapor, like a furnace-smoke, crawls forever on the horizon. Thus watered, plants multiply; in the angle between Jutland and the continent, in a fat muddy soil, "the verdure is as fresh as that of England." [1] Immense forests covered the land even after the eleventh century. The sap of this humid country, thick and potent, circulates in man as in the plants; man's respiration, nutrition, sensations and habits affect also his faculties and his frame.

The land produced after this fashion has one enemy, to wit, the sea. Holland maintains its existence only by virtue of its dykes. In 1654 those in Jutland burst, and fifteen thousand of

[1] Malte-Brun, iv. 398. Not counting bays, gulfs, and canals, the sixteenth part of the country is covered by water. The dialect of Jutland bears still a great resemblance to English.

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the inhabitants were swallowed up. One need only see the blast of the North swirl down upon the low level of the soil, wan and ominous:[2] the vast yellow sea dashes against the narrow belt of flat coast which seems incapable of a moment's resistance; the wind howls and bellows; the sea-mews cry; the poor little ships flee as fast as they can, bending almost to the gunwale, and endeavor to find a refuge in the mouth of the river, which seems as hostile as the sea. A sad and precarious existence, as it were face to face with a beast of prey. The Frisians, in their ancient laws, speak already of the league they have made against "the ferocious ocean." Even in a calm this sea is unsafe. "Before me rolleth a waste of water . . . and above me go rolling the storm-clouds, the formless dark gray daughters of air, which from the sea, in cloudy buckets scoop up the water, ever wearied lifting and lifting, and then pour it again in the sea, a mournful, wearisome business. Over the sea, flat on his face, lies the monstrous terrible North wind, sighing and sinking his voice as in secret, like an old grumbler, for once in good humor, unto the ocean he talks, and he tells her wonderful stories."[3] Rain, wind, and surge leave room for naught but gloomy and melancholy thoughts. The very joy of the billows has in it an inexplicable restlessness and harshness. From Holland to Jutland, a string of small deluged islands[4] bears witness to their ravages; the shifting sands which the tide drifts up obstruct and impede the banks and entrance of the rivers.[5] The first Roman fleet, a thousand sail, perished there; to this day ships wait a month or more in sight of port, tossed upon the great white waves, not daring to risk themselves in the shifting winding channel, notorious for its wrecks. In winter a breast-plate of ice covers the two streams; the sea drives back the frozen masses as they descend; they pile themselves with a crash upon the sandbanks, and sway to and fro; now and then you may see a vessel, seized as

[2] See Ruysdaal's painting in Mr. Baring's collection. Of the three Saxon islands, North Strandt, Busen, and Heligoland, North Strandt was inundated by the sea in 1300, 1483, 1532, 1615, and almost destroyed in 1634. Busen is a level plain, beaten by storms, which it has been found necessary to surround by a dyke. Heligoland was laid waste by the sea in 800, 1300, 1500, 1649, the last time so violently that only a portion of it remained.—Turner, "History of Anglo-Saxons," 1852, i. 97.

[3] Heine, "The North Sea," translated by Charles G. Leland. See Tacitus, "Annals," book 2, for the impressions of the Romans, "truculentia cœli."

[4] Watten, Platen, Sande, Düneninseln.

[5] Nine or ten miles out near Heligoland, are the nearest soundings of about fifty fathoms.

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in a vice, split in two beneath their violence. Picture, in this foggy clime, amid hoar-frost and storm, in these marshes and forests, half-naked savages, a kind of wild beasts, fishers and hunters, but especially hunters of men; these are they, Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Frisians;[6] later on, Danes, who during the fifth and the ninth centuries, with their swords and battle-axes, took and kept the island of Britain.

A rude and foggy land, like their own, except in the depth of its sea and the safety of its coasts, which one day will call up real fleets and mighty vessels; green England—the word rises to the lips and expresses all. Here also moisture pervades everything; even in summer the mist rises; even on clear days you perceive it fresh from the great sea-girdle, or rising from vast but ever slushy meadows, undulating with hill and dale, intersected with hedges to the limit of the horizon. Here and there a sunbeam strikes on the higher grasses with burning flash, and the splendor of the verdure dazzles and almost blinds you. The overflowing water straightens the flabby stems; they grow up, rank, weak, and filled with sap; a sap ever renewed, for the gray mists creep under a stratum of motionless vapor, and at distant intervals the rim of heaven is drenched by heavy showers. "There are yet commons as at the time of the Conquest, deserted, abandoned,[7] wild, covered with furze and thorny plants, with here and there a horse grazing in solitude. Joyless scene, unproductive soil![8] What a labor it has been to humanize it! What impression it must have made on the men of the South, the Romans of Cæsar! I thought, when I saw it, of the ancient Saxons, wanderers from West and North, who came to settle in this land of marsh and fogs, on the border of primeval forests, on the banks of these great muddy streams, which roll down their slime to meet the waves.[9] They must have lived as hunters and swineherds; growing, as before, brawny, fierce, gloomy. Take civilization from this soil, and there will remain to the inhabitants only war, the chase, gluttony, drunkenness. Smiling love, sweet poetic dreams, art, refined and nimble thought, are for the happy

[6] Palgrave, "Saxon Commonwealth," vol. i.

[7] "Notes of a Journey in England."

[8] Léonce de Lavergne, "De l'Agriculture anglaise." "The soil is much worse than that of France."

[9] There are at least four rivers in England passing by the name of "Ouse," which is only another form of "ooze." —Tr.

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shores of the Mediterranean. Here the barbarian, ill housed in his mud-hovel, who hears the rain pattering whole days among the oak leaves—what dreams can he have, gazing upon his mud-pools and his sombre sky?"

Section II.—The Northern Barbarians

Huge white bodies, cool-blooded, with fierce blue eyes, reddish flaxen hair; ravenous stomachs, filled with meat and cheese, heated by strong drinks; of a cold temperament, slow to love,[1] home-stayers, prone to brutal drunkenness: these are to this day the features which descent and climate preserve in the race, and these are what the Roman historians discovered in their former country. There is no living, in these lands, without abundance of solid food; bad weather keeps people at home; strong drinks are necessary to cheer them; the senses become blunted, the muscles are braced, the will vigorous. In every country the body of man is rooted deep into the soil of nature; and in this instance still deeper, because, being uncultivated, he is less removed from nature. In Germany storm-beaten, in wretched boats of hide, amid the hardships and dangers of seafaring life, they were pre-eminently adapted for endurance and enterprise, inured to misfortune, scorners of danger. Pirates at first: of all kinds of hunting the man-hunt is most profitable and most noble; they left the care of the land and flocks to the women and slaves; seafaring, war, and pillage[2] was their whole idea of a freeman's work. They dashed to sea in their two-sailed barks, landed anywhere, killed everything; and having sacrificed in honor of their gods the tithe of their prisoners, and leaving behind them the red light of their burnings, went farther on to begin again. "Lord," says a certain litany, "deliver us from the fury of the Jutes." "Of all barbarians[3] these are strongest of body and heart, the most formidable,"—we may add, the most cruelly ferocious. When murder becomes a trade, it becomes a pleasure. About the

[1] Tacitus, "De moribus Germanorum," passim: Diem noctemque continuare potando, nulli proborum.—Sera juvenum Venus.—Totos dies juxta focum atque ignem agunt. Dargaud, "Voyage en Danemark." "They take six meals per day, the first at five o'clock in the morning. One should see the faces and meals at Hamburg and at Amsterdam."

[2] Bede, v. 10. Sidonius, viii. 6. Lingard, "History of England," 1854, i. chap. 2.

[3] Zozimos, iii. 147. Amm. Marcellinus, xxviii. 526.

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eighth century, the final decay of the great Roman corpse which Charlemagne had tried to revive, and which was settling down into corruption, called them like vultures to the prey. Those who had remained in Denmark, with their brothers of Norway, fanatical pagans, incensed against the Christians, made a descent on all the surrounding coasts. Their sea-kings,[4] "who had never slept under the smoky rafters of a roof, who had never drained the ale-horn by an inhabited hearth," laughed at wind and storms, and sang: "The blast of the tempest aids our oars; the bellowing of heaven, the howling of the thunder, hurt us not; the hurricane is our servant, and drives us whither we wish to go." "We hewed with our swords," says a song attributed to Ragnar Lodbrog; "was it not like that hour when my bright bride I seated by me on the couch?" One of them, at the monastery of Peterborough, kills with his own hand all the monks, to the number of eighty-four; others, having taken King Ælla, divided his ribs from the spine, drew his lungs out, threw salt into his wounds. Harold Harefoot, having seized his rival Alfred, with six hundred men, had them maimed, blinded, hamstrung, scalped, or embowelled.[5] Torture and carnage, greed of danger, fury of destruction, obstinate and frenzied bravery of an over-strong temperament, the unchaining of the butcherly instincts—such traits meet us at every step in the old Sagas. The daughter of the Danish Jarl, seeing Egil taking his seat near her, repels him with scorn, reproaching him with "seldom having provided the wolves with hot meat, with never having seen for the whole autumn a raven croaking over the carnage." But Egil seized her and pacified her by singing: "I have marched with my bloody sword, and the raven has followed me. Furiously we fought, the fire passed over the dwellings of men; we have sent to sleep in blood those who kept the gates." From such table-talk, and such maidenly tastes, we may judge of the rest.[6]

Behold them now in England, more settled and wealthier:

[4] Aug. Thierry, "Hist. S. Edmundi," vi. 441. See Ynglingasaga, and especially Egil's Saga.

[5] Lingard, "History of England," i. 164, says, however, "Every tenth man out of the six hundred received his liberty, and of the rest a few were selected for slavery."—Tr.

[6] Franks, Frisians, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, Icelanders are one and the same people. Their language, laws, religion, poetry, differ but little. The more northern continue longest in their primitive manners. Germany in the fourth and fifth centuries, Denmark and Norway in the seventh and eighth, Iceland in the tenth and eleventh centuries, present the same condition, and the muniments of each country will fill up the gaps that exist in the history of the others.

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do you expect to find them much changed? Changed it may be, but for the worse, like the Franks, like all barbarians who pass from action to enjoyment. They are more gluttonous, carving their hogs, filling themselves with flesh, swallowing down deep draughts of mead, ale, spiced wines, all the strong, coarse drinks which they can procure, and so they are cheered and stimulated. Add to this the pleasure of the fight. Not easily with such instincts can they attain to culture; to find a natural and ready culture, we must look amongst the sober and sprightly populations of the south. Here the sluggish and heavy[7] temperament remains long buried in a brutal life; people of the Latin race never at a first glance see in them aught but large gross beasts, clumsy and ridiculous when not dangerous and enraged. Up to the sixteenth century, says an old historian, the great body of the nation were little else than herdsmen, keepers of cattle and sheep; up to the end of the eighteenth drunkenness was the recreation of the higher ranks; it is still that of the lower; and all the refinement and softening influence of civilization have not abolished amongst them the use of the rod and the fist. If the carnivorous, warlike, drinking savage, proof against the climate, still shows beneath the conventions of our modern society and the softness of our modern polish, imagine what he must have been when, landing with his band upon a wasted or desert country, and becoming for the first time a settler, he saw extending to the horizon the common pastures of the border country, and the great primitive forests which furnished stags for the chase and acorns for his pigs. The ancient histories tell us that they had a great and a coarse appetite.[8] Even at the time of the Conquest the custom of drinking to excess was a common vice with men of the highest rank, and they passed in this way whole days and nights without intermission. Henry of Huntingdon, in the twelfth century, lamenting the ancient hospitality, says that the Norman kings provided their courtiers with only one meal a day, while the Saxon kings used to provide four. One day, when Athelstan went with his nobles to visit his relative Ethelfleda, the provision of mead was exhausted at the first salutation, owing to the copiousness of the draughts; but Dunstan, forecasting

[7] Tacitus, "De moribus Germanotum," xxii.: Gens nec astuta nec callida.

[8] William of Malmesbury. Henry of Huntingdon, vi. 365.

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the extent of the royal appetite, had furnish the house so that the cup-bearers, as is the custom at royal feasts, were able the whole day to serve it out in horns and other vessels, and the liquor was not found to be deficient. When the guests were satisfied, the harp passed from hand to hand; and the rude harmony of their deep voices swelled under the vaulted roof. The monasteries themselves in Edgard's time kept up games, songs, and dances till midnight. To shout, to drink, to gesticulate, to feel their veins heated and swollen with wine, to hear and see around them the riotous orgies, this was the first need of the barbarians.[9] The heavy human brute gluts himself with sensations and with noise.

For such appetites there was a stronger food—I mean blows and battle. In vain they attached themselves to the soil, became tillers of the ground, in distinct communities and distinct regions, shut up [10] in their march with their kindred and comrades, bound together, separated from the mass, enclosed by sacred landmarks, by primeval oaks on which they cut the figures of birds and beasts, by poles set up in the midst of the marsh, which whosoever removed was punished with cruel tortures. In vain these Marches and Ga's [11] were grouped into states, and finally formed a half-regulated society, with assemblies and laws, under the lead of a single king; its very structure indicates the necessities to supply which it was created. They united in order to maintain peace; treaties of peace occupy their Parliaments; provisions for peace are the matter of their laws. War was waged daily and everywhere; the aim of life was, not to be slain, ransomed, mutilated, pillaged, hanged, and of course, if it was a woman, violated.[12] Every man was obliged to appear armed, and to be ready, with his burgh or his township, to repel marauders, who went about in bands.[13] The animal was yet too powerful, too impetuous, too untamed. Anger and covetousness in the first place brought him upon his prey. Their history, I mean that of the Heptarchy, is like

[9] Tacitus, "De moribus Germanorum," xxii., xxiii.

[10] Kemble, "Saxons in England," 1849, i. 70, ii. 184. "The Acts of an Anglo-Saxon parliament are a series of treaties of peace between all the associations which make up the State; a continual revision and renewal of the alliances offensive and defensive of all the free men. They are universally mutual contracts for the maintenance of the frid or peace."

[11] A large district; the word is still existing in German, as Rheingau, Breisgau.—Tr.

[12] Turner, "History of the Anglo-Saxons," ii. 440, Laws of Ina.

[13] Such a band consisted of thirty-five men or more.

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a history of "kites and crows."[14] They slew the Britons or reduced them to slavery, fought the remnant of the Welsh, Irish, and Picts, massacred one another, were hewn down and cut to pieces by the Danes. In a hundred years, out of fourteen kings of Northumbria, seven were slain and six deposed. Penda of Mercia killed five kings, and in order to take the town of Bamborough, demolished all the neighboring villages, heaped their ruins into an immense pile, sufficient to burn all the inhabitants, undertook to exterminate the Northumbrians, and perished himself by the sword at the age of eighty. Many amongst them were put to death by the thanes; one thane was burned alive; brothers slew one another treacherously. With us civilization has interposed, between the desire and its fulfilment, the counteracting and softening preventive of reflection and calculation; here, the impulse is sudden, and murder and every kind of excess spring from it instantaneously. King Edwy[15] having married Elgiva, his relation within the prohibited degrees, quitted the hall where he was drinking on the very day of his coronation, to be with her. The nobles thought themselves insulted, and immediately Abbot Dunstan went himself to seek the young man. "He found the adulteress," says the monk Osbern, "her mother, and the king together on the bed of debauch. He dragged the king thence violently, and setting the crown upon his head, brought him back to the nobles." Afterwards Elgiva sent men to put out Dunstan's eyes, and then, in a revolt, saved herself and the king by hiding in the country; but the men of the North having seized her, "hamstrung her, and then subjected her to the death which she deserved."[16] Barbarity follows barbarity. At Bristol, at the time of the Conquest, as we are told by a historian of the time,[17] it was the custom to buy men and women in all parts of England, and to carry them to Ireland for sale in order to make money. The buyers usually made the young women pregnant, and took them to market in that condition, in order to insure a better price. "You might have seen with

[14] Milton's expression. Lingard's History, i. chap. 3. This history bears much resemblance to that of the Franks in Gaul. See Gregory of Tours. The Saxons, like the Franks, somewhat softened, but rather degenerated, were pillaged and massacred by those of their Northern brothers who still remained in a savage state.

[15] Vita S. Dunstani, "Anglia Sacra," ii.

[16] It is amusing to compare the story of Edwy and Elgiva in Turner, ii. 216, etc., and then Lingard, i. 132, etc. The first accuses Dunstan, the other defends him.—Tr.

[17] "Life of Bishop Wolstan."

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sorrow long files of young people of both sexes and of the greatest beauty, bound with ropes, and daily exposed for sale. . . . They sold in this manner as slaves their nearest relatives, and even their own children." And the chronicler adds that, having abandoned this practice, they "thus set an example to all the rest of England." Would you know the manners of the highest ranks, in the family of the last king?[18] At a feast in the king's hall, Harold was serving Edward the Confessor with wine, when Tostig, his brother, moved by envy, seized him by the hair. They were separated. Tostig went to Hereford, where Harold had ordered a royal banquet to be prepared. There he seized his brother's attendants, and cutting off their heads and limbs, he placed them in the vessels of wine, ale, mead, and cider, and sent a message to the king: "If you go to your farm, you will find there plenty of salt meat, but you will do well to carry some more with you." Harold's other brother, Sweyn, had violated the abbess Elgiva, assassinated Beorn the thane, and being banished from the country had turned pirate. When we regard their deeds of violence, their ferocity, their cannibal jests, we see that they were not far removed from the sea-kings, or from the followers of Odin, who ate raw flesh, hung men as victims on the sacred trees of Upsala, and killed themselves to make sure of dying as they had lived, in blood. A score of times the old ferocious instinct reappears beneath the thin crust of Christianity. In the eleventh century, Siward,[19] the great Earl of Northumberland, was afflicted with a dysentery; and feeling his death near, exclaimed, "What a shame for me not to have been permitted to die in so many battles, and to end thus by a cow's death! At least put on my breastplate, gird on my sword, set my helmet on my head, my shield in my left hand, my battle-axe in my right, so that a stout warrior, like myself, may die as a warrior." They did as he bade, and thus died he honorably in his armor. They had made one step, and only one, from barbarism.

[18] Tantæ sævitiæ erant fratres illi quod, cum alicujus nitidam villam conspicerem, dominatorem de nocte interfici uberent, totamque progeniem illius possessionemque defunct obtinerent. Turner, iii. 27. Henry of Huntingdon, vi. 367.

[19] "Pene gigas statura," says the chronicler. Henry of Huntingdon, vi. 367. Kemble, i. 393. Turner, ii. 318.

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Section III.—Saxon Ideas

Under this native barbarism there were noble dispositions, unknown to the Roman world, which were destined to produce a better people out of its ruins. In the first place, "a certain earnestness, which leads them out of frivolous sentiments to noble ones."[1] From their origin in Germany this is what we find them, severe in manners, with grave inclinations and a manly dignity. They live solitary, each one near the spring or the wood which has taken his fancy.[2] Even in villages the cottages were detached; they must have independence and free air. They had no taste for voluptuousness; love was tardy, education severe, their food simple; all the recreation they indulged in was the hunting of the aurochs, and a dance amongst naked swords. Violent intoxication and perilous wagers were their weakest points; they sought in preference not mild pleasures, but strong excitement. In everything, even in their rude and masculine instincts, they were men. Each in his own home, on his land and in his hut, was his own master, upright and free, in no wise restrained or shackled. If the commonweal received anything from him, it was because he gave it. He gave his vote in arms in all great conferences, passed judgment in the assembly, made alliances and wars on his own account, moved from place to place, showed activity and daring.[3] The modern Englishman existed entire in this Saxon. If he bends, it is because he is quite willing to bend; he is no less capable of self-denial than of independence; self-sacrifice is not uncommon, a man cares not for his blood or his life. In Homer the warrior often gives way, and is not blamed if he flees. In the Sagas, in the Edda, he must be over-brave; in Germany the coward is drowned in the mud, under a hurdle. Through all outbreaks of primitive brutality gleams obscurely the grand idea of duty, which is, the self-constraint exercised in view of some noble end. Marriage was pure amongst them, chastity instinctive. Amongst the Saxons the adulterer was punished by death; the adulteress was obliged to hang herself, or was stabbed by the knives of her companions. The wives of

[1] Grimm, "Mythology," 53, Preface.
[2] Tacitus, xx., xxiii., xi., xii., xiii., et passim. We may still see the traces of this taste in English dwellings.
[3] Ibid. xiii.

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the Cimbrians, when they could not obtain from Marius assurance of their chastity, slew themselves with their own hands. They thought there was something sacred in a woman; they married but one, and kept faith with her. In fifteen centuries the idea of marriage is unchanged amongst them. The wife, on entering her husband's home, is aware that she gives herself altogether,[4] "that she will have but one body, one life with him; that she will have no thought, no desire beyond; that she will be the companion of his perils and labors; that she will suffer and dare as much as he, both in peace and war." And he, like her, knows that he gives himself. Having chosen his chief, he forgets himself in him, assigns to him his own glory, serves him to the death. "He is infamous as long as he lives, who returns from the field of battle without his chief."[5] It was on this voluntary subordination that feudal society was based. Man in this race can accept a superior, can be capable of devotion and respect. Thrown back upon himself by the gloom and severity of his climate, he has discovered moral beauty while others discover sensuous beauty. This kind of naked brute, who lies all day by his fireside, sluggish and dirty, always eating and drinking,[6] whose rusty faculties cannot follow the clear and fine outlines of happily created poetic forms, catches a glimpse of the sublime in his troubled dreams. He does not see it, but simply feels it; his religion is already within, as it will be in the sixteenth century, when he will cast off the sensuous worship imported from Rome, and hallow the faith of the heart.[7] His gods are not enclosed in walls; he has no idols. What he designates by divine names is something invisible and grand, which floats through nature, and is conceived beyond nature,[8] a mysterious infinity which the sense cannot touch, but which "reverence alone can feel"; and when, later on, the legends define and alter this vague divination of natural powers, one idea remains at the bottom of this chaos of giant-dreams, namely, that the world is a warfare, and heroism the highest good.

[4] Tacitus, xix., viii., xvi. Kemble, i. 232.

[5] Tacitus, xiv.

[6] "In omni domo, nudi et sordidi. . . . Pius per otium transigunt, dediti somno, ciboque, otos dies juxta focum atque ignem agunt."

[7] Grimm, 53, Preface. Tacitus, x.

[8] Deorum nominibus appellant secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident." Later on, at Upsala for instance, they had images (Adam of Bremen, "Historia Ecclesiastica"). Wuotan (Odin), signifies etymologically the All-Powerful, him who penetrates and circulates through everything (Grimm, "Mythology").

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In the beginning, say the old Icelandic legends,[9] there were two worlds, Niflheim the frozen, and Muspell the burning. From the falling snow-flakes was born the giant Ymir. "There was in times of old, where Ymir dwelt, nor sand nor sea, nor gelid waves; earth existed not, nor heaven above; 'twas a chaotic chasm, and grass nowhere." There was but Ymir, the horrible frozen Ocean, with his children, sprung from his feet and his armpits; then their shapeless progeny, Terrors of the abyss, barren Mountains, Whirlwinds of the North, and other malevolent beings, enemies of the sun and of life; then the cow Andhumbla, born also of melting snow, brings to light, whilst licking the hoar-frost from the rocks, a man Bur, whose grandsons kill the giant Ymir. "From his flesh the earth was formed, and from his bones the hills, the heaven from the skull of that ice-cold giant, and from his blood the sea; but of his brains the heavy clouds are all created." Then arose war between the monsters of winter and the luminous fertile gods, Odin the founder, Baldur the mild and benevolent, Thor the summer-thunder, who purifies the air, and nourishes the earth with showers. Long fought the gods against the frozen Jötuns, against the dark bestial powers, the Wolf Fenrir, the great Serpent, whom they drown in the sea, the treacherous Loki, whom they bind to the rocks, beneath a viper whose venom drops continually on his face. Long will the heroes who by a bloody death deserve to be placed "in the halls of Odin, and there wage a combat every day," assist the gods in their mighty war. A day will, however, arrive when gods and men will be conquered. Then

"trembles Yggdrasil's ash yet standing; groans that ancient tree, and the Jötun Loki is loosed. The shadows groan on the ways of Hel,[10] until the fire of Surt has consumed the tree. Hrym steers from the east, the waters rise, the mundane snake is coiled in jötun-rage. The worm beats the water, and the eagle screams; the pale of beak tears carcasses; (the ship) Naglfar is loosed. Surt from the South comes with flickering flame; shines from his sword the Val-god's sun. The stony hills are dashed together, the giantesses totter; men tread the path of Hel, and heaven is cloven. The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, fall from

[9] "Sæmundar Edda, Snorra Edda," ed. Copenhagen, three vols., passim. Mr. Bergmann has translated several of these poems into French, which Mr. Taine quotes. The translator has generally made use of the edition of Mr. Thorpe, London, 1866.

[10] Hel, the goddess of death, born of Loki and Angrboda.—Tr.

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heaven the bright stars, fire's breath assails the all-nourishing tree, towering fire plays against heaven itself." [11]

The gods perish, devoured one by one by the monsters; and the celestial legend, sad and grand now like the life of man, bears witness to the hearts of warriors and heroes.

There is no fear of pain, no care for life; they count it as dross when the idea has seized upon them. The trembling of the nerves, the repugnance of animal instinct which starts back before wounds and death, are all lost in an irresistible determination. See how in their epic [12] the sublime springs up amid the horrible, like a bright purple flower amid a pool of blood. Sigurd has plunged his sword into the dragon Fafnir, and at that very moment they looked on one another; and Fafnir asks, as he dies, "Who art thou? and who is thy father? and what thy kin, that thou wert so hardy as to bear weapons against me?" "A hardy heart urged me on thereto, and a strong hand and this sharp sword. . . . Seldom hath hardy eld a faint-heart youth." After this triumphant eagle's cry Sigurd cuts out the worm's heart; but Regin, brother of Fafnir, drinks blood from the wound, and falls asleep. Sigurd, who was roasting the heart, raises his finger thoughtlessly to his lips. Forthwith he understands the language of the birds. The eagles scream above him in the branches. They warn him to mistrust Regin. Sigurd cuts off the latter's head, eats of Fafnir's heart, drinks his blood and his brother's. Amongst all these murders their courage and poetry grow. Sigurd has subdued Brynhild, the untamed maiden, by passing through the flaming fire; they share one couch for three nights, his naked sword betwixt them. "Nor the damsel did he kiss, nor did the Hunnish king to his arm lift her. He the blooming maid to Giuki's son delivered," because, according to his oath, he must send her to her betrothed Gunnar. She, setting her love upon him, "Alone she sat without, at eve of day, began aloud with herself to speak: 'Sigurd must be mine; I must die, or that blooming youth clasp in my arms.'" But seeing him married, she brings about his death. "Laughed then Brynhild,

[11] Thorpe, "The Edda of Sæmund, the Vala's Prophecy," str. 48-56, p. 9 et passim.

[12] "Fafnismâl Edda." This epic is common to the Northern races, as is the Iliad to the Greek populations, and is found almost entire in Germany in the Nibelungen Lied. The translator has also used Magnusson and Morris's poetical version of the "Völsunga Saga," and certain songs of the "Elder Edda," London, 1870.

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Budli's daughter, once only, from her whole soul, when in her bed she listened to the loud lament of Giuki's daughter." She put on her golden corslet, pierced herself with the sword's point, and as a last request said:

"Let in the plain be raised a pile so spacious, that for us all like room may be; let them burn the Hun (Sigurd) on the one side of me, on the other side my household slaves, with collars splendid, two at our heads, and two hawks; let also lie between us both the keen-edged sword, as when we both one couch ascended; also five female thralls, eight male slaves of gentle birth fostered with me." [13]

All were burnt together; yet Gudrun the widow continued motionless by the corpse, and could not weep. The wives of the jarls came to console her, and each of them told her own sorrows, all the calamities of great devastations and the old life of barbarism.

"Then spoke Giaflang, Giuki's sister: 'Lo, up on earth I live most loveless, who of five mates must see the ending, of daughters twain and three sisters, of brethren eight, and abide behind lonely.' Then spake Herborg, Queen of Hunland: 'Crueller tale have I to tell of my seven sons, down in the Southlands, and the eight man, my mate, felled in the death-mead. Father and mother, and four brothers on the wide sea the winds and death played with; the billows beat on the bulwark boards. Alone must I sing o'er them, alone must I array them, alone must my hands deal with their departing; and all this was in one season's wearing, and none was left for love or solace. Then was I bound a prey of the battle when that same season wore to its ending; as a tiring may must I bind the shoon of the duke's high dame, every day at dawning. From her jealous hate gat I heavy mocking, cruel lashes she laid upon me." [14]

All was in vain; no word could draw tears from those dry eyes. They were obliged to lay the bloody corpse before her, ere her tears would come. Then tears flowed through the pillow; as "the geese withal that were in the home-field, the fair fowls the may owned, fell a-screaming." She would have died, like Sigrun, on the corpse of him whom alone she had loved, if they had not deprived her of memory by a magic potion. Thus affected, she departs in order to marry Atli, king of the Huns; and yet she goes against her will, with gloomy forebodings: for murder begets murder; and her brothers, the murderers of Sigurd,

[13] Thorpe, "The Edda of Sæmund, Third Lay of Sigurd Fafnicide," str. 62-64, p. 83.

[14] Magnusson and Morris, "Story of the Volsungs and Nibelungs, Lamentation of Guaran," p. 118 et passim.

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having been drawn to Atli's court, fall in their turn into a snare like that which they had themselves laid. Then Gunnar was bound, and they tried to make him deliver up the treasure. He answers with a barbarian's laugh:

"'Högni's heart in my hand shall lie, cut bloody from the breast of the valiant chief, the king's son, with a dull-edged knife.' They the heart cut out from Hialli's breast; on a dish, bleeding, laid it, and it to Gunnar bare. Then said Gunnar, lord of men: 'Here have I the heart of the timid Hialli, unlike the heart of the bold Högni; for much it trembles as in the dish it lies; it trembled more by half while in his breast it lay.' Högni laughed when to his heart they cut the living crest-crasher; no lament uttered he. All bleeding on a dish they laid it, and it to Gunnar bare. Calmly said Gunnar, the warrior Niflung: 'Here have I the heart of the bold Högni, unlike the heart of the timid Hialli; for it little trembles as in the dish it lies: it trembled less while in his breast it lay. So far shalt thou, Atli! be from the eyes of men as thou wilt from the treasures be. In my power alone is all the hidden Niflung's gold, now that Högni lives not. Ever was I wavering while we both lived: now am I so no longer, as I alone survive.'" [15]

It was the last insult of the self-confident man, who values neither his own life nor that of another, so that he can satiate his vengeance. They cast him into the serpent's den, and there he died, striking his harp with his foot. But the inextinguishable flame of vengeance passed from his heart to that of his sister. Corpse after corpse fall on each other; a mighty fury hurls them open-eyed to death. She killed the children she had by Atli, and one day on his return from the carnage, gave him their hearts to eat, served in honey, and laughed coldly as she told him on what he had fed. "Uproar was on the benches, portentous the cry of men, noise beneath the costly hangings. The children of the Huns wept; all wept save Gudrun, who never wept or for her bear-fierce brothers, or for her dear sons, young, simple." [16] Judge from this heap of ruin and carnage to what excess the will is strung. There were men amongst them, Berserkirs,[17] who in battle seized with a sort of madness, showed a sudden and superhuman strength, and ceased to feel their wounds. This is the conception of a hero as engendered by this race in its infancy. Is it not strange to see them place their happiness in battle,

[15] Thorpe, "The Edda of Sæmund, Lay of Atli," str. 21-27, p. 117.
[16] Ibid., str. 38, p. 119.
[17] This word signifies men who fought without a breastplate, perhaps in shirts only; Scottice, "Baresarks."—Tr.

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their beauty in death? Is there any people, Hindoo, Persian, Greek, or Gallic, which has formed so tragic a conception of life? Is there any which has peopled its infantine mind with such gloomy dreams? Is there any which has so entirely banished from its dreams the sweetness of enjoyment, and the softness of pleasure? Endeavors, tenacious and mournful endeavors, an ecstasy of endeavors—such was their chosen condition. Carlyle said well, that in the sombre obstinacy of an English laborer still survives the tacit rage of the Scandinavian warrior. Strife for strife's sake—such is their pleasure. With what sadness, madness, destruction, such a disposition breaks its bonds, we shall see in Shakespeare and Byron; with what vigor and purpose it can limit and employ itself when possessed by moral ideas, we shall see in the case of the Puritans.

Section IV.—Saxon Heroes

They have established themselves in England; and however disordered the society which binds them together, it is founded, as in Germany, on generous sentiment. War is at every door, I am aware, but warlike virtues are within every house; courage chiefly, then fidelity. Under the brute there is a free man, and a man of spirit. There is no man amongst them who, at his own risk,[1] will not make alliance, go forth to fight, undertake adventures. There is no group of free men amongst them, who, in their Witenagemote, is not forever concluding alliances one with another. Every clan, in its own district, forms a league of which all the members, "brothers of the sword," defend each other, and demand revenge for the spilling of blood, at the price of their own. Every chief in his hall reckons that he has friends, not mercenaries, in the faithful ones who drink his beer, and who, having received as marks of his esteem and confidence, bracelets, swords, and suits of armor, will cast themselves between him and danger on the day of battle.[2] Independence and boldness rage amongst this young nation with violence and excess; but these are of themselves noble things; and no less noble are the sentiments which serve them for dis-

[1] See the "Life of Sweyn," of Hereward, etc., even up to the time of the Conquest.

[2] Beowulf, passim, Death of Byrhtnoth.

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cipline—to wit, an affectionate devotion, and respect for plighted faith. These appear in their laws, and break forth in their poetry. Amongst them greatness of heart gives matter for imagination. Their characters are not selfish and shifty, like those of Homer. They are brave hearts, simple and strong, faithful to their relatives, to their master in arms, firm and steadfast to enemies and friends, abounding in courage, and ready for sacrifice. "Old as I am," says one, "I will not budge hence. I mean to die by my lord's side, near this man I have loved so much. He kept his word, the word he had given to his chief, to the distributor of gifts, promising him that they should return to the town, safe and sound to their homes, or that they would fall both together, in the thick of the carnage, covered with wounds. He lies by his master's side, like a faithful servant." Though awkward in speech, their old poets find touching words when they have to paint these manly friendships. We cannot without emotion hear them relate how the old "king embraced the best of his thanes, and put his arms about his neck, how the tears flowed down the cheeks of the gray-haired chief. . . . The valiant man was so dear to him. He could not stop the flood which mounted from his breast. In his heart, deep in the chords of his soul, he sighed in secret after the beloved man." Few as are the songs which remain to us, they return to this subject again and again. The wanderer in a reverie dreams about his lord:[3] It seems to him in his spirit as if he kisses and embraces him, and lays head and hands upon his knees, as oft before in the olden time, when he rejoiced in his gifts. Then he wakes—a man without friends. He sees before him the desert tracks, the seabirds dipping in the waves, stretching wide their wings, the frost and the snow, mingled with falling hail. Then his heart's wounds press more heavily. The exile says:

"In blithe habits full oft we, too, agreed that nought else should divide us except death alone; at length this is changed, and as if it had never been is now our friendship. To endure enmities man orders me to dwell in the bowers of the forest, under the oak-tree in this earthy cave. Cold is this earth-dwelling: I am quite wearied out. Dim are the dells, high up are the mountains, a bitter city of twigs, with briars overgrown, a joyless abode. . . . My friends are in the earth; those loved in life,

[3] "The Wanderer, the Exile's Song, Codex Exoniensis," published by Thorpe.

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the tomb holds them. The grave is guarding, while I above alone am going. Under the oak-tree, beyond this earth-cave, there I must sit the long summer-day."

Amid their perilous mode of life, and the perpetual appeal to arms, there exists no sentiment more warm than friendship, nor any virtue stronger than loyalty.

Thus supported by powerful affection and trysted word, society is kept wholesome. Marriage is like the state. We find women associating with the men, at their feasts, sober and respected.[4] She speaks, and they listen to her; no need for concealing or enslaving her, in order to restrain or retain her. She is a person and not a thing. The law demands her consent to marriage, surrounds her with guarantees, accords her protection. She can inherit, possess, bequeath, appear in courts of justice, in county assemblies, in the great congress of the elders. Frequently the name of the queen and of several other ladies is inscribed in the proceedings of the Witenagemote. Law and tradition maintain her integrity, as if she were a man, and side by side with men. Her affections captivate her, as if she were a man, and side by side with men. In Alfred[5] there is a portrait of the wife, which for purity and elevation equals all that we can devise with our modern refinements. "Thy wife now lives for thee—for thee alone. She has enough of all kind of wealth for this present life, but she scorns them all for thy sake alone. She has forsaken them all, because she had not thee with them. Thy absence makes her think that all she possesses is nought. Thus, for love of thee, she is wasted away, and lies near death for tears and grief." Already, in the legends of the Edda, we have seen the maiden Sigrun at the tomb of Helgi, "as glad as the voracious hawks of Odin, when they of slaughter know, of warm prey," desiring to sleep still in the arms of death, and die at last on his grave. Nothing here like the love we find in the primitive poetry of France, Provence, Spain, and Greece. There is an absence of gayety, of delight; outside of marriage it is only a ferocious appetite, an outbreak of the instinct of the beast. It appears nowhere with its charm and its smile; there is no love-song in this ancient poetry. The reason is, that with them love is not an amuse-

[4] Turner, "History of the Anglo-Saxons," iii. 63.

[5] Alfred borrows his portrait from Boethius, but almost entirely rewrites it.

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ment and a pleasure, but a promise and a devotion. All is grave, even sombre, in civil relations as well as in conjugal society. As in Germany, amid the sadness of a melancholic temperament and the savagery of a barbarous life, the most tragic human faculties, the deep power of love and the grand power of will, are the only ones that sway and act.

This is why the hero, as in Germany, is truly heroic. Let us speak of him at length; we possess one of their poems, that of Beowulf, almost entire. Here are the stories, which the thanes, seated on their stools, by the light of their torches, listened to as they drank the ale of their king: we can glean thence their manners and sentiments, as in the Iliad and the Odyssey those of the Greeks. Beowulf is a hero, a knight-errant before the days of chivalry, as the leaders of the German bands were feudal chiefs before the institution of feudalism.[6] He has "rowed upon the sea, his naked sword hard in his hand, amidst the fierce waves and coldest of storms, and the rage of winter hurtled over the waves of the deep." The sea-monsters, "the many-colored foes, drew him to the bottom of the sea, and held him fast in their gripe." But he reached "the wretches with his point and with his war-bill." "The mighty sea-beast received the war-rush through his hands," and he slew nine Nicors (sea-monsters). And now behold him, as he comes across the waves to succor the old King Hrothgar, who with his vassals sits afflicted in his great mead-hall, high and curved with pinnacles. For "a grim stranger, Grendel, a mighty haunter of the marshes," had entered his hall during the night, seized thirty of the thanes who were asleep, and returned in his war-craft with their carcasses; for twelve years the dreadful ogre, the beastly and greedy creature, father of Orks and Jötuns, devoured men and emptied the best of houses. Beowulf, the great warrior, offers to grapple with the fiend, and foe to foe contend for life, without the bearing of either sword or ample shield, for he has "learned also that the wretch for his cursed hide recketh not of weapons," asking only that if death takes him, they will bear forth his bloody corpse and bury it;

[6] Kemble thinks that the origin of this poem is very ancient, perhaps contemporary with the invasion of the Angles and Saxons, but that the version we possess is later than the seventh century.—Kemble's "Beowulf," text and translation, 1833. The characters are Danish.

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mark his fen-dwelling, and send to Hygelác, his chief, the best of war-shrouds that guards his breast.

He is lying in the hall, "trusting in his proud strength; and when the mists of night arose, lo, Grendel comes, tears open the door," seized a sleeping warrior: "he tore him unawares, he bit his body, he drank the blood from the veins, he swallowed him with continual tearings." But Beowulf seized him in turn, and "raised himself upon his elbow."

"The lordly hall thundered, the ale was spilled, . . . both were enraged; savage and strong warders; the house resounded; then was it a great wonder that the wine-hall withstood the beasts of war, that it fell not upon the earth, the fair palace; but it was thus fast. . . . The noise arose, new enough; a fearful terror fell on the North Danes, on each of those who from the wall heard the outcry, God's denier sing his dreadful lay, his song of defeat, lament his wound.[7] . . . The foul wretch awaited the mortal wound; a mighty gash was evident upon his shoulder; the sinews sprung asunder, the junctures of the bones burst; success in war was given to Beowulf. Thence must Grendel fly sick unto death, among the refuges of the fens, to seek his joyless dwelling. He all the better knew that the end of his life, the number of his days was gone by." [8]

For he had left on the ground, "hand, arm, and shoulder"; and "in the lake of Nicors, where he was driven, the rough wave was boiling with blood, the foul spring of waves all mingled, hot with poison; the dye, discolored with death, bubbled with warlike gore." There remained a female monster, his mother, who, like him, "was doomed to inhabit the terror of waters, the cold streams," who came by night, and amidst drawn swords tore and devoured another man, Æschere, the king's best friend. A lamentation arose in the palace, and Beowulf offered himself again. They went to the den, a hidden land, the refuge of the wolf, near the windy promontories, where a mountain stream rusheth downwards under the darkness of the hills, a flood beneath the earth; the wood fast by its roots overshadoweth the water; there may one by night behold a marvel, fire upon the flood; the stepper over the heath, when wearied out by the hounds, sooner will give up his soul, his life upon the brink, than plunge therein to hide his head. Strange dragons and serpents swam there; "from time to time the horn sang a dirge, a terrible song." Beowulf plunged into the wave,

[7] Kemble's "Beowulf," xi. p. 32. [8] Ibid. xii. p. 34.

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descended, passed monsters who tore his coat of mail, to the ogress, the hateful manslayer, who, seizing him in her grasp, bore him off to her dwelling. A pale gleam shone brightly, and there, face to face, the good champion perceived

"the she-wolf of the abyss, the mighty sea-woman; he gave the war-onset with his battle-bill; he held not back the swing of the sword, so that on her head the ring-mail sang aloud a greedy war-song. . . . The beam of war would not bite. Then caught the prince of the War-Geáts Grendel's mother by the shoulders . . . twisted the homicide, so that she bent upon the floor. . . She drew her knife broad, brown-edged (and tried to pierce), the twisted breast-net which protected his life. . . . Then saw he among the weapons a bill fortunate in victory, an old gigantic sword, doughty of edge, ready for use, the work of giants. He seized the belted hilt; the warrior of the Scyldings, fierce and savage whirled the ring-mail; despairing of life, he struck furiously, so that it grappled hard with her about the neck; it broke the bone-rings, the bill passed through all the doomed body; she sank upon the floor; the sword was bloody, the man rejoiced in his deed; the beam shone, light stood within, even as from heaven mildly shines the lamp of the firmament." [9]

Then he saw Grendel dead in a corner of the hall; and four of his companions, having with difficulty raised the monstrous head, bore it by the hair to the palace of the king.

That was his first labor; and the rest of his life was similar. When he had reigned fifty years on earth, a dragon, who had been robbed of his treasure, came from the hill and burned men and houses "with waves of fire." "Then did the refuge of earls command to make for him a variegated shield, all of iron; he knew well enough that a shield of wood could not help him, lindenwood opposed to fire. . . . The prince of rings was then too proud to seek the wide flier with a troop, with a large company; he feared not for himself that battle, nor did he make any account of the dragon's war, his laboriousness and valor." And yet he was sad, and went unwillingly, for he was "fated to abide the end." Then "he was ware of a cavern, a mound under the earth, nigh to the sea wave, the clashing of waters, which cave was full within of embossed ornaments and wires. . . . Then the king, hard in war, sat upon the promontory, whilst he, the prince of the Geáts, bade farewell to his household comrades. . . . I, the old guardian of my people, seek

[9] "Beowulf," xxii., xxiii. p. 62 et passim.

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a feud." He "let words proceed from his breast," the dragon came, vomiting fire; the blade bit not his body, and the king "suffered painfully, involved in fire." His comrades had "turned to the wood, to save their lives," all save Wiglaf, who "went through the fatal smoke," knowing well "that it was not the old custom" to abandon relation and prince, "that he alone . . . shall suffer distress, shall sink in battle." "The worm came furious, the foul insidious stranger, variegated with waves of fire, . . . hot and warlike fierce, he clutched the whole neck with bitter banes; he was bloodied with life-gore, the blood boiled in waves." [10] They, with their swords, carved the worm in the midst. Yet the wound of the king became burning and swelled; "he soon discovered that poison boiled in his breast within, and sat by the wall upon a stone"; "he looked upon the work of giants, how the eternal cavern held within stone arches fast upon pillars." Then he said—

"I have held this people fifty years; there was not any king of my neighbors, who dared to greet me with warriors, to oppress me with terror. . . . I held mine own well, I sought not treacherous malice, nor swore unjustly many oaths; on account of all this, I, sick with mortal wounds, may have joy. . . . Now do thou go immediately to behold the hoard under the hoary stone, my dear Wiglaf. . . . Now, I have purchased with my death a hoard of treasures; it will be yet of advantage at the need of the people. . . . I give thanks . . . that I might before my dying day obtain such for my peoples . . . longer may I not here be." [11]

This is thorough and real generosity, not exaggerated and pretended, as it will be later on in the romantic imaginations of babbling clerics, mere composers of adventure. Fiction as yet is not far removed from fact; the man breathes manifest beneath the hero. Rude as the poetry is, its hero is grand; he is so, simply by his deeds. Faithful, first to his prince, then to his people, he went alone, in a strange land, to venture himself for the delivery of his fellow-men; he forgets himself in death, while thinking only that it profits others. "Each one of us," he says in one place, "must abide the end of his present life." Let, therefore, each do justice, if he can, before his death. Compare with him the monsters whom he destroys, the last tradi-

[10] "Beowulf," xxxiii., xxxvi. p. 94 et passim.
[11] Ibid. xxxvii., xxxviii. p. 110 et passim. I have throughout always used the very words of Kemble's translation.—Tr.

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tions of the ancient wars against inferior races, and of the primitive religion; think of his life of danger, nights upon the waves, man grappling with the brute creation; man's indomitable will crushing the breasts of beasts; man's powerful muscles which, when exerted, tear the flesh of the monsters; you will see reappear through the mist of legends, and under the light of poetry, the valiant men who, amid the madness of war and the raging of their own mood, began to settle a people and to found a state.

Section V.—Pagan Poems

One poem nearly whole and two or three fragments are all that remain of this lay-poetry of England. The rest of the pagan current, German and barbarian, was arrested or overwhelmed, first by the influx of the Christian religion, then by the conquest of the Norman-French. But what remains more than suffices to show the strange and powerful poetic genius of the race, and to exhibit beforehand the flower in the bud.

If there has ever been anywhere a deep and serious poetic sentiment, it is here. They do not speak, they sing, or rather they shout. Each little verse is an acclamation, which breaks forth like a growl; their strong breasts heave with a groan of anger or enthusiasm, and a vehement or indistinct phrase or expression rises suddenly, almost in spite of them, to their lips. There is no art, no natural talent, for describing singly and in order the different parts of an object or an event. The fifty rays of light which every phenomenon emits in succession to a regular and well-directed intellect, come to them at once in a glowing and confused mass, disabling them by their force and convergence. Listen to their genuine war-chants, unchecked and violent, as became their terrible voices. To this day, at this distance of time, separated as they are by manners, speech, ten centuries, we seem to hear them still:

"The army goes forth: the birds sing, the cricket chirps, the war-weapons sound, the lance clangs against the shield. Now shineth the moon, wandering under the sky. Now arise deeds of woe, which the enmity of this people prepares to do. . . . Then in the court came the tumult of war-carnage. They seized with their hands the hollow wood of the shield. They smote through the bones of the head. The roofs of the castle resounded, until Garulf fell in battle, the first of earth-

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dwelling men, son of Guthlaf. Around him lay many brave men dying. The raven whirled about, dark and sombre, like a willow leaf. There was a sparkling of blades, as if all Finsburg were on fire. Never have I heard of a more worthy battle in war." [1]

This is the song on Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh:

"Here Athelstan king, of earls the lord, the giver of the bracelets of the nobles, and his brother also, Edmund the ætheling, the Elder a lasting glory won by slaughter in battle, with the edges of swords, at Brunanburh. The wall of shields they cleaved, they hewed the noble banners: with the rest of the family, the children of Edward. . . . Pursuing, they destroyed the Scottish people and the ship-fleet. . . . The field was colored with the warriors' blood! After that the sun on high, . . . the greatest star! glided over the earth, God's candle bright! till the noble creature hastened to her setting. There lay soldiers many with darts struck down, Northern men over their shields shot. So were the Scots; weary of ruddy battle. . . . The screamers of war they left behind; the raven to enjoy, the dismal kite, and the black raven with horned beak, and the hoarse toad; the eagle, afterwards to feast on the white flesh; the greedy battle-hawk, and the grey beast, the wolf in the wood." [2]

Here all is imagery. In their impassioned minds events are not bald, with the dry propriety of an exact description; each fits in with its pomp of sound, shape, coloring; it is almost a vision which is raised, complete, with its accompanying emotions, joy, fury, excitement. In their speech, arrows are "the serpents of Hel, shot from bows of horn"; ships are "great sea-steeds," the sea is "a chalice of waves," the helmet is "the castle of the head"; they need an extraordinary speech to express their vehement sensations, so that after a time, in Iceland, where this kind of poetry was carried on to excess, the earlier inspiration failed, art replaced nature, the Skalds were reduced to a distorted and obscure jargon. But whatever be the imagery, here, as in Iceland, though unique, it is too feeble. The poets have not satisfied their inner emotion, if it is only expressed by a single word. Time after time they return to and repeat their idea. "The sun on high, the great star, God's brilliant candle, the noble creature!" Four times successively they employ the same thought, and each time under a new aspect. All its different aspects rise simultaneously before the

[1] Conybeare's "Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry," 1826, "Battle of Finsborough," p. 175. The complete collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry has been published by M. Grein.

[2] Turner, "History of Anglo-Saxons," iii. book 9, ch. i. p. 245.

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barbarian's eyes, and each word was like a fit of the semi-hallucination which possessed him. Verily, in such a condition, the regularity of speech and of ideas is disturbed at every turn. The succession of thought in the visionary is not the same as in a reasoning mind. One color induces another; from sound he passes to sound; his imagination is like a diorama of unexplained pictures. His phrases recur and change; he emits the word that comes to his lips without hesitation; he leaps over wide intervals from idea to idea. The more his mind is transported, the quicker and wider the intervals traversed. With one spring he visits the poles of his horizon, and touches in one moment objects which seemed to have the world between them. His ideas are entangled without order; without notice, abruptly, the poet will return to the idea he has quitted, and insert it in the thought to which he is giving expression. It is impossible to translate these incongruous ideas, which quite disconcert our modern style. At times they are unintelligible.[3] Articles, particles, everything capable of illuminating thought, of marking the connection of terms, of producing regularity of ideas, all rational and logical artifices, are neglected.[4] Passion bellows forth like a great shapeless beast; and that is all. It rises and starts in little abrupt lines; it is the acme of barbarism. Homer's happy poetry is copiously developed, in full narrative, with rich and extended imagery. All the details of a complete picture are not too much for him; he loves to look at things, he lingers over them, rejoices in their beauty, dresses them in splendid words; he is like the Greek girls, who thought themselves ugly if they did not bedeck arms and shoulders with all the gold coins from their purse, and all the treasures from their caskets; his long verses flow by with their cadences, and spread out like a purple robe under an Ionian sun. Here the clumsy-fingered poet crowds and clashes his ideas in a narrow measure; if measure there be, he barely observes it; all his ornament is three words beginning with the same letter. His chief care is to abridge, to imprison thought in a kind of mutilated cry.[5] The force of the internal impression, which, not

[3] The cleverest Anglo-Saxon scholars, Turner, Conybeare, Thorpe, recognize this difficulty.

[4] Turner, iii. 231 et passim. The translations in French, however literal, do injustice to the text; that language is too clear, too logical. No Frenchman can understand this extraordinary phase of intellect, except by taking a dictionary, and deciphering some pages of Anglo-Saxon for a fortnight.

[5] Turner remarks that the same idea

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knowing how to unfold itself, becomes condensed and doubled by accumulation; the harshness of the outward expression, which, subservient to the energy and shocks of the inner sentiment, seek only to exhibit it intact and original, in spite of and at the expense of all order and beauty—such are the characteristics of their poetry, and these also will be the characteristics of the poetry which is to follow.

Section VI.—Christian Poems

A race so constituted was predisposed to Christianity, by its gloom, its aversion to sensual and reckless living, its inclination for the serious and sublime. When their sedentary habits had reconciled their souls to a long period of ease, and weakened the fury which fed their sanguinary religion, they readily inclined to a new faith. The vague adoration of the great powers of nature, which eternally fight for mutual destruction, and, when destroyed, rise up again to the combat, had long since disappeared in the dim distance. Society, on its formation, introduced the idea of peace and the need for justice, and the war-gods faded from the minds of men, with the passions which had created them. A century and a half after the invasion by the Saxons,[1] Roman missionaries, bearing a silver cross with a picture of Christ, came in procession chanting a litany. Presently the high priest of the Northumbrians declared in presence of the nobles that the old gods were powerless, and confessed that formerly "he knew nothing of that which he adored"; and he among the first, lance in hand, assisted to demolish their temple. Then a chief rose in the assembly, and said:

"You remember, it may be, O king, that which sometimes happens in winter when you are seated at table with your earls and thanes. Your fire is lighted, and your hall warmed, and without is rain and snow and storm. Then comes a swallow flying across the hall; he enters by one door, and leaves by another. The brief moment while he is within is pleasant to him; he feels not rain nor cheerless winter weather; but the moment is brief—the bird flies away in the twinkling of an eye, and he passes from winter to winter. Such, methinks, is the life of man on earth, compared with the uncertain time beyond. It appears for a while;

expressed by King Alfred, in prose and then in verse takes in the first case seven words, in the second five.—"History of the Anglo-Saxons," iii. 235.

[1] 596-625. Aug. Thierry, i. 81; Bede, xii. 2.

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but what is the time which comes after—the time which was before? We know not. If, then, this new doctrine may teach us somewhat of greater certainty, it were well that we should regard it."

This restlessness, this feeling of the infinite and dark beyond, this sober, melancholy eloquence, were the harbingers of spiritual life.[2] We find nothing like it amongst the nations of the south, naturally pagan, and preoccupied with the present life. These utter barbarians embrace Christianity straightway, through sheer force of mood and clime. To no purpose are they brutal, heavy, shackled by infantine superstitions, capable, like King Canute, of buying for a hundred golden talents the arm of Augustine. They possess the idea of God. This grand God of the Bible, omnipotent and unique, who disappears almost entirely in the Middle Ages,[3] obscured by His court and His family, endures amongst them in spite of absurd or grotesque legends. They do not blot Him out under pious romances, by the elevation of the saints, or under feminine caresses, to benefit the infant Jesus and the Virgin. Their grandeur and their severity raise them to His high level; they are not tempted, like artistic and talkative nations, to replace religion by a fair and agreeable narrative. More than any race in Europe, they approach, by the simplicity and energy of their conceptions, the old Hebraic spirit. Enthusiasm is their natural condition; and their new Deity fills them with admiration, as their ancient deities inspired them with fury. They have hymns, genuine odes, which are but a concrete of exclamations. They have no development; they are incapable of restraining or explaining their passion; it bursts forth, in raptures, at the vision of the Almighty. The heart alone speaks here—a strong, barbarous heart. Cædmon, their old poet,[4] says Bede, was a more ignorant man than the others, who knew no poetry; so that in the hall, when they handed him the harp, he was obliged to withdraw, being unable to sing like his companions. Once, keeping night-watch over the stable, he fell asleep. A stranger appeared to him, and asked him to sing something, and these words came into his head: "Now we ought to praise the Lord of heaven, the power of the Creator, and His skill, the deeds

[2] Jouffroy, "Problem of Human Destiny."
[3] Michelet, preface to "La Renaissance"; Didron, "Histoire de Dieu."
[4] About 630. See "Codex Exoniensis," Thorpe.

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of the Father of glory; how he, being eternal God, is the author of all marvels; who, almighty guardian of the human race, created first for the sons of men the heavens as the roof of their dwelling, and then the earth." Remembering this when he woke,[5] he came to the town, and they brought him before the learned men, before the abbess Hilda, who, when they had heard him, thought that he had received a gift from heaven, and made him a monk in the abbey. There he spent his life listening to portions of Holy Writ, which were explained to him in Saxon, "ruminating over them like a pure animal, turned them into most sweet verse." Thus is true poetry born. These men pray with all the emotion of a new soul; they kneel; they adore; the less they know the more they think. Someone has said that the first and most sincere hymn is this one word O! Theirs were hardly longer; they only repeated time after time some deep passionate word, with monotonous vehemence. "In heaven art Thou, our aid and succor, resplendent with happiness! All things bow before Thee, before the glory of Thy Spirit. With one voice they call upon Christ; they all cry: Holy, holy art Thou, King of the angels of heaven, our Lord! and Thy judgments are just and great; they reign forever and in all places, in the multitude of Thy works." We are reminded of the songs of the servants of Odin, tonsured now, and clad in the garments of monks. Their poetry is the same; they think of God, as of Odin, in a string of short, accumulated, passionate images, like a succession of lightning-flashes; the Christian hymns are a sequel to the pagan. One of them, Adhelm, stood on a bridge leading to the town where he lived, and repeated warlike and profane odes as well as religious poetry, in order to attract and instruct the men of his time. He could do it without changing his key. In one of them, a funeral song, Death speaks. It was one of the last Saxon compositions, containing a terrible Christianity, which seems at the same time to have sprung from the blackest depths of the Edda. The brief metre sounds abruptly, with measured stroke, like the passing bell. It is as if we hear the dull resounding responses which roll through the church, while the rain beats on the dim glass, and the broken clouds sail mournfully in the sky; and our eyes, glued to the pale face of a dead man feel beforehand

[5] Bede, iv. 24.

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the horror of the damp grave into which the living are about to cast him.

"For thee was a house built ere thou wert born; for thee was a mould shapen ere thou of thy mother camest. Its height is not determined, nor its depth measured; nor is it closed up (however long it may be) until I thee bring where thou shalt remain; until I shall measure thee and the sod of the earth. Thy house is not highly built; it is unhigh and low. When thou art in it, the heel-ways are low, the side-ways unhigh. The roof is built thy breast full high; so thou shalt in earth dwell full cold, dim, and dark. Doorless is that house, and dark it is within. There thou art fast detained, and Death holds the key. Loathly is that earth-house, and grim to dwell in. There thou shalt dwell, and worms shall share thee. Thus thou art laid, and leavest thy friends. Thou hast no friend that will come to thee, who will ever inquire how that house liketh thee, who shall ever open for thee the door, and seek thee, for soon thou becomest loathly and hateful to look upon." [6]

Has Jeremy Taylor a more gloomy picture? The two religious poetries, Christian and pagan, are so like, that one might mingle their incongruities, images, and legends. In Beowulf, altogether pagan, the Deity appears as Odin, more mighty and serene, and differs from the other only as a peaceful Bretwalda [7] differs from an adventurous and heroic bandit-chief. The Scandinavian monsters, Jötuns, enemies of the Æsir,[8] have not vanished; but they descend from Cain, and the giants drowned by the flood.[9] Their new hell is nearly the ancient Nástrand,[10] "a dwelling deadly cold, full of bloody eagles and pale adders"; and the dreadful last day of judgment, when all will crumble into dust, and make way for a purer world, resembles the final destruction of Edda, that "twilight of the gods," which will end in a victorious regeneration, an everlasting joy "under a fairer sun."

By this natural conformity they were able to make their religious poems indeed poems. Power in spiritual productions arises only from the sincerity of personal and original sentiment. If they can relate religious tragedies, it is because their soul was tragic, and in a degree biblical. They introduce into

[6] Conybeare's "Illustrations," p. 271.

[7] Bretwalda was a species of war-king, or temporary and elective chief of all the Saxons.—Tr.

[8] The Æsir (sing. As) are the gods of the Scandinavian nations, of whom Odin was the chief.—Tr.

[9] Kemble, i. i. xii. In this chapter he has collected many features which show the endurance of the ancient mythology.

[10] Nástrand is the strand or shore of the dead.—Tr.

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their verses, like the old prophets of Israel, their fierce vehemence, their murderous hatreds, their fanaticism, all the shudderings of their flesh and blood. One of them, whose poem is mutilated, has related the history of Judith—with what inspiration we shall see. It needed a barbarian to display in such strong light excesses, tumult, murder, vengeance, and combat.

"Then was Hòlofernes exhilarated with wine; in the halls of his guests he laughed and shouted, he roared and dinned. Then might the children of men afar off hear how the stern one stormed and clamored, animated and elated with wine. He admonished amply that they should bear it well to those sitting on the bench. So was the wicked one over all the day, the lord and his men, drunk with wine, the stern dispenser of wealth; till that they swimming lay over drunk, all his nobility, as they were death-slain." [11]

The night having arrived, he commands them to bring into his tent "the illustrious virgin"; then, going to visit her, he falls drunk on his bed. The moment was come for "the maid of the Creator, the holy woman."

"She took the heathen man fast by his hair; she drew him by his limbs towards her disgracefully; and the mischief-ful odious man at her pleasure laid; so as the wretch she might the easiest well command. She with the twisted locks struck the hateful enemy, meditating hate, with the red sword, till she had half cut off his neck; so that he lay in a swoon, drunk and mortally wounded. He was not then dead, not entirely lifeless. She struck then earnest, the woman illustrious in strength, another time the heathen hound, till that his head rolled forth upon the floor. The foul one lay without a coffer; backward his spirit turned under the abyss, and there was plunged below, with sulphur fastened; forever afterward wounded by worms. Bound in torments, hard imprisoned, in hell he burns. After his course he need not hope, with darkness overwhelmed, that he may escape from that mansion of worms; but there he shall remain; ever and ever, without end, henceforth in that cavern-house, void of the joys of hope." [12]

Had anyone ever heard a sterner accent of satisfied hate? When Clovis listened to the Passion play, he cried, "Why was I not there with my Franks!" So here the old warrior instinct swelled into flame over the Hebrew wars. As soon as Judith returned,

"Men under helms (went out) from the holy city at the dawn itself. They dinned shields; men roared loudly. At this rejoiced the lank

[11] Turner, "History of Anglo-Saxons," iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 271.

[12] Ibid. iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 272.

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wolf in the wood, and the wan raven, the fowl greedy of slaughter, both from the west, that the sons of men for them should have thought to prepare their fill on corpses. And to them flew in their paths the active devourer, the eagle, hoary in his feathers. The willowed kite, with his horned beak, sang the song of Hilda. The noble warriors proceeded, they in mail, to the battle, furnished with shields, with swelling banners. . . . They then speedily let fly forth showers of arrows, the serpents of Hilda, from their horn bows; the spears on the ground hard stormed. Loud raged the plunderers of battle; they sent their darts into the throng of the chiefs. . . . They that awhile before the reproach of the foreigners, the taunts of the heathen endured." [13]

Amongst all these unknown poets [14] there is one whose name we know, Cædmon, perhaps the old Cædmon who wrote the first hymn; like him, at all events, who, paraphrasing the Bible with a barbarian's vigor and sublimity, has shown the grandeur and fury of the sentiment with which the men of these times entered into their new religion. He also sings when he speaks; when he mentions the ark, it is with a profusion of poetic names, "the floating house, the greatest of floating chambers, the wooden fortress, the moving roof, the cavern, the great sea-chest," and many more. Every time he thinks of it, he sees it with his mind, like a quick luminous vision, and each time under a new aspect, now undulating on the muddy waves, between two ridges of foam, now casting over the water its enormous shadow, black and high like a castle, "now enclosing in its cavernous sides" the endless swarm of caged beasts. Like the others, he wrestles with God in his heart; triumphs like a warrior over destruction and victory; and in relating the death of Pharaoh, can hardly speak from anger, or see, because the blood mounts to his eyes.

"The folk was affrighted, the flood-dread seized on their sad souls; ocean wailed with death, the mountain heights were with blood besteamed, the sea foamed gore, crying was in the waves, the water full of weapons, a death-mist rose; the Egyptians were turned back; trembling they fled, they felt fear: would that host gladly find their homes; their vaunt grew sadder: against them, as a cloud, rose the fell rolling of the waves; there came not any of that host to home, but from behind enclosed them fate with the wave. Where ways ere lay sea raged. Their might was merged, the streams stood, the storm rose high to heaven; the loudest army-cry the hostile uttered; the air above was

[13] Turner, "History of Anglo-Saxons," iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 274.

[14] Grein, "Bibliothek der Angelsæchsischen Poesie."

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thickened with dying voices. . . . Ocean raged, drew itself up on high, the storms rose, the corpses rolled." [15]

Is the song of the Exodus more abrupt, more vehement, or more savage? These men can speak of the creation like the Bible, because they speak of destruction like the Bible. They have only to look into their own hearts in order to discover an emotion sufficiently strong to raise their souls to the height of their Creator. This emotion existed already in their pagan legends; and Cædmon, in order to recount the origin of things, has only to turn to the ancient dreams, such as have been preserved in the prophecies of the Edda.

"There had not here as yet, save cavern-shade, aught been; but this wide abyss stood deep and dim, strange to its Lord, idle and useless; on which looked with his eyes the King firm of mind, and beheld these places void of joys; saw the dark cloud lower in eternal night, swart under heaven, dark and waste, until this worldly creation through the word existed of the Glory-King. . . . The earth as yet was not green with grass; ocean cover'd, swart in eternal night, far and wide the dusky ways." [16]

In this manner will Milton hereafter speak, the descendant of the Hebrew seers, last of the Scandinavian seers, but assisted in the development of his thought by all the resources of Latin culture and civilization. And yet he will add nothing to the primitive sentiment. Religious instinct is not acquired; it belongs to the blood, and is inherited with it. So it is with other instincts; pride in the first place, indomitable self-conscious energy, which sets man in opposition to all domination, and inures him against all pain. Milton's Satan exists already in Cædmon's, as the picture exists in the sketch; because both have their model in the race; and Cædmon found his originals in the northern warriors, as Milton did in the Puritans:

"Why shall I for his favor serve, bend to him in such vassalage? I may be a god as he. Stand by me, strong associates, who will not fail me in the strife. Heroes stern of mood, they have chosen me for chief, renowned warriors! with such may one devise counsel, with such capture his adherents; they are my zealous friends, faithful in their thoughts; I may be their chieftain, sway in this realm; thus to me it seemeth not right that I in aught need cringe to God for any good; I will no longer be his vassal." [17]

[15] Thorpe, "Cædmon," 1832, xlvii. p. 206.

[16] Ibid. ii. p. 7. A likeness exists between this song and corresponding portions of the Edda.

[17] Ibid. iv. p. 18.

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He is overcome: shall he be subdued? He is cast into the place "where torment they suffer, burning heat intense, in midst of hell, fire, and broad flames; so also the bitter seeks smoke and darkness"; will he repent? At first he is astonished, he despairs; but it is a hero's despair.

"This narrow place is most unlike that other that we ere knew,[18] high in heaven's kingdom, which my master bestow'd on me. . . . Oh, had I power of my hands, and might one season be without, be one winter's space, then with this host I—But around me lie iron bonds, presseth this cord of chain: I am powerless! me have so hard the clasps of hell, so firmly grasped! Here is a vast fire above and underneath, never did I see a loathlier landskip; the flame abateth not, hot over hell. Me hath the clasping of these rings, this hard-polish'd band, impeded in my course, debarr'd me from my way; my feet are bound, my hands manacled, . . . so that with aught I cannot from these limb-bonds escape." [19]

As there is nothing to be done against God, it is His new creature, man, whom he must attack. To him who has lost everything, vengeance is left; and if the conquered can enjoy this, he will find himself happy; "he will sleep softly, even under his chains."

Section VII.—Primitive Saxon Authors

Here the foreign culture ceased. Beyond Christianity it could not graft upon this barbarous stock any fruitful or living branch. All the circumstances which elsewhere mellowed the wild sap, failed here. The Saxons found Britain abandoned by the Romans; they had not yielded, like their brothers on the Continent, to the ascendancy of a superior civilization; they had not become mingled with the inhabitants of the land; they had always treated them like enemies or slaves, pursuing like wolves those who escaped to the mountains of the west, treating like beasts of burden those whom they had conquered with the land. While the Germans of Gaul, Italy, and Spain became Romans, the Saxons retained their language, their genius and manners, and created in Britain a Germany outside of Germany. A hundred and fifty years after the Saxon invasion, the introduction of Christianity and the dawn of security attained by a

[18] This is Milton's opening also. (See "Paradise Lost," book i. verse 242, etc.) One would think that he must have had some knowledge of Cædmon from the translation of Junius.

[19] Thorpe, "Cædmon," iv. p. 23.

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society inclining to peace, gave birth to a kind of literature; and we meet with the venerable Bede, and later on, Alcuin, John Scotus Erigena, and some others, commentators, translators, teachers of barbarians, who tried not to originate but to compile, to pick out and explain from the great Greek and Latin encyclopædia something which might suit the men of their time. But the wars with the Danes came and crushed this humble plant, which, if left to itself, would have come to nothing.[1] When Alfred[2] the Deliverer became king, "there were very few ecclesiastics," he says, "on this side of the Humber, who could understand in English their own Latin prayers, or translate any Latin writing into English. On the other side of the Humber I think there were scarce any; there were so few that, in truth, I cannot remember a single man south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom, who was capable of it." He tried, like Charlemagne, to instruct his people, and turned into Saxon for their use several works, above all some moral books, as the "de Consolatione" of Boethius; but this very translation bears witness to the barbarism of his audience. He adapts the text in order to bring it down to their intelligence; the pretty verses of Boethius, somewhat pretentious, labored, elegant, crowded with classical allusions of a refined and compact style worthy of Seneca, become an artless, long-drawn-out and yet desultory prose, like a nurse's fairy tale, explaining everything, recommencing and breaking off its phrases, making ten turns about a single detail; so low was it necessary to stoop to the level of this new intelligence, which had never thought or known anything. Here follows the Latin of Boethius, so affected, so pretty, with the English translation affixed:

"Quondam funera conjugis
Vates Threicius gemens,
Postquam flebilibus modis
Silvas currere, mobiles
Amnes stare coegerat,
Junxitque intrepidum latus
Sævis cerva leonibus,
Nic visum timuit lepus

[1] They themselves feel their impotence and decrepitude. Bede, dividing the history of the world into six periods, says that the fifth, which stretches from the return out of Babylon to the birth of Christ, is the senile period; the sixth is the present, "ætas decrepita, totius morte sæculi consummanda."

[2] Died in 901; Adhelm died 709, Bede died 735, Alcuin lived under Charlemagne, Erigena under Charles the Bald (843-877).

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Jam cantu placidum canem;
Cum flagrantior intima
Fervor pectoris ureret,
Nec qui cuncta subegerant
Mulcerent dominum modi;
Immites superos querens,
Infernas adiit domos.
Illic blanda sonantibus
Chordis carmina temperans,
Quidquid præcipuis Deæ
Matris fontibus hauserat,
Quod luctus dabat impotens,
Quod luctum geminans amor,
Deflet Tartara commovens,
Et dulci veniam prece
Umbrarum dominos rogat.
Stupet tergeminus novo
Captus carmine janitor;
Quæ sontes agitant metu
Ultrices scelerum Deæ
Jam mœstæ lacrymis madent.
Non Ixionium caput
Velox præcipitat rota,
Et longa site perditus
Spernit flumina Tantalus.
Vultur dum satur est modis
Non traxit Tityi jecur.
Tandem, vincimur, arbiter
Umbrarum miserans ait.
Donemus comitem viro,
Emptam carmine conjugem.
Sed lex dona coerceat,
Nec, dum Tartara liquerit,
Fas sit lumina flectere.
Quis legem det amantibus!
Major lex fit amor sibi.
Heu! noctis prope terminos
Orpheus Eurydicem suam
Vidit, perdidit, occidit.
Vos hæc fabula respicit,
Quicunque in superum diem
Mentem ducere quæritis.
Nam qui tartareum in specus
Victus lumina flexerit,
Quidquid præcipuum trahit
Perdit, dum videt inferos."

—*Book iii. Metre 12.*

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The English translation follows:

"It happened formerly that there was a harper in the country called Thrace, which was in Greece. The harper was inconceivably good. His name was Orpheus. He had a very excellent wife, called Eurydice. Then began men to say concerning the harper, that he could harp so that the wood moved, and the stones stirred themselves at the sound, and wild beasts would run thereto, and stand as if they were tame; so still, that though men or hounds pursued them, they shunned them not. Then said they, that the harper's wife should die, and her soul should be led to hell. Then should the harper become so sorrowful that he could not remain among the men, but frequented the wood, and sat on the mountains, both day and night, weeping and harping, so that the woods shook, and the rivers stood still, and no hart shunned any lion, nor hare any hound; nor did cattle know any hatred, or any fear of others, for the pleasure of the sound. Then it seemed to the harper that nothing in this world pleased him. Then thought he that he would seek the gods of hell, and endeavor to allure them with his harp, and pray that they would give him back his wife. When he came thither, then should there come towards him the dog of hell, whose name was Cerberus—he should have three heads—and began to wag his tail, and play with him for his harping. Then was there also a very horrible gatekeeper, whose name should be Charon. He had also three heads, and he was very old. Then began the harper to beseech him that he would protect him while he was there, and bring him thence again safe. Then did he promise that to him, because he was desirous of the unaccustomed sound. Then went he further until he met the fierce goddesses, whom the common people call Parcæ, of whom they say, that they know no respect for any man, but punish every man according to his deeds; and of whom they say, that they control every man's fortune. Then began he to implore their mercy. Then began they to weep with him. Then went he farther, and all the inhabitants of hell ran towards him, and led him to their king: and all began to speak with him, and to pray that which he prayed. And the restless wheel which Ixion, the king of the Lapithæ, was bound to for his guilt, that stood still for his harping. And Tantalus the king, who in this world was immoderately greedy, and whom that same vice of greediness followed there, he became quiet. And the vulture should cease, so that he tore not the liver of Tityus the king, which before therewith tormented him. And all the punishments of the inhabitants of hell were suspended, whilst he harped before the king. When he long and long had harped, then spoke the king of the inhabitants of hell, and said, Let us give the man his wife, for he has earned her by his harping. He then commanded him that he should well observe that he never looked backwards after he departed hence; and said, if he looked backwards, that he should lose the woman. But men can with great difficulty, if at all, restrain love! Wellaway! What! Orpheus then led his wife with him till he came to the boundary of light and darkness. Then went his wife after him. When he came forth into the light, then looked

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be behind his back towards the woman. Then was she immediately lost to him. This fable teaches every man who desires to fly the darkness of hell, and to come to the light of the true good, that he look not about him to his old vices, so that he practise them again as fully as he did before. For whosoever with full will turns his mind to the vices which he had before forsaken, and practises them, and they then fully please him, and he never thinks of forsaking them; then loses he all his former good unless he again amend it." [3]

A man speaks thus when he wishes to impress upon the mind of his hearers an idea which is not clear to them. Boethius had for his audience senators, men of culture, who understood as well as we the slightest mythological allusion. Alfred is obliged to take them up and develop them, like a father or a master, who draws his little boy between his knees, and relates to him names, qualities, crimes and their punishments, which the Latin only hints at. But the ignorance is such that the teacher himself needs correction. He takes the Parcæ for the Erinyes, and gives Charon three heads like Cerberus. There is no adornment in his version; no delicacy as in the original. Alfred has hard work to make himself understood. What, for instance, becomes of the noble Platonic moral, the apt interpretation after the style of Iamblichus and Porphyry? It is altogether dulled. He has to call everything by its name, and turn the eyes of his people to tangible and visible things. It is a sermon suited to his audience of thanes; the Danes whom he had converted by the sword needed a clear moral. If he had translated for them exactly the last words of Boethius, they would have opened wide their big stupid eyes and fallen asleep.

For the whole talent of an uncultivated mind lies in the force and oneness of its sensations. Beyond that it is powerless. The art of thinking and reasoning lies above it. These men lost all genius when they lost their fever-heat. They lisped awkwardly and heavily dry chronicles, a sort of historical almanacs. You might think them peasants, who, returning from their toil, came and scribbled with chalk on a smoky table the date of a year of scarcity, the price of corn, the changes in the weather, a death. Even so, side by side with the meagre Bible chronicles, which set down the successions of kings, and of Jewish massacres, are exhibited the exaltation of the psalms and the transports of prophecy. The same lyric poet can be

[3] Fox's "Alfred's Boethius," chap. 35, sec. 6, 1864.

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alternately a brute and a genius, because his genius comes and goes like a disease, and instead of having it he simply is ruled by it.

"AD. 611. This year Cynegils succeeded to the government in Wessex, and held it one-and-thirty winters. Cynegils was the son of Ceol, Ceol of Cutha, Cutha of Cynric.

"614. This year Cynegils and Cnichelm fought at Bampton, and slew two thousand and forty-six of the Welsh.

"678. This year appeared the comet-star in August, and shone every morning during three months like a sunbeam. Bishop Wilfrid being driven from his bishopric by King Everth, two bishops were consecrated in his stead.

"901. This year died Alfred, the son of Ethelwulf, six nights before the mass of All Saints. He was king over all the English nation, except that part that was under the power of the Danes. He held the government one year and a half less than thirty winters; and then Edward his son took to the government.

"902. This year there was the great fight at the Holme, between the men of Kent and the Danes.

"1077. This year were reconciled the King of the Franks, and William, King of England. But it was continued only a little while. This year was London burned, one night before the Assumption of St. Mary, so terribly as it never was before since it was built." [4]

It is thus the poor monks speak, with monotonous dryness, who, after Alfred's time, gather up and take note of great visible events; sparsely scattered we find a few moral reflections, a passionate emotion, nothing more. In the tenth century we see King Edgar give a manor to a bishop, on condition that he will put into Saxon the monastic regulation written in Latin by Saint Benedict. Alfred himself was almost the last man of culture; he, like Charlemagne, became so only by dint of determination and patience. In vain the great spirits of this age endeavor to link themselves to the relics of the fine, ancient civilization, and to raise themselves above the chaotic and muddy ignorance in which the others flounder. They rise almost alone, and on their death the rest sink again into the mire. It is the human beast that remains master; the mind cannot find a place amidst the outbursts and the desires of the flesh, gluttony and brute force. Even in the little circle where he moves, his labor comes to nought. The model which he proposed to himself oppresses and enchains him in a cramping imitation; he

[4] All these extracts are taken from Ingram's "Saxon Chronicle," 1823.

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aspires but to be a good copyist; he produces a gathering of centos which he calls Latin verses; he applies himself to the discovery of expressions, sanctioned by good models; he succeeds only in elaborating an emphatic, spoiled Latin, bristling with incongruities. In place of ideas, the most profound amongst them serve up the defunct doctrines of defunct authors. They compile religious manuals and philosophical manuals from the Fathers. Erigena, the most learned, goes to the extent of reproducing the old complicated dreams of Alexandrian metaphysics. How far these speculations and reminiscences soar above the barbarous crowd which howls and bustles in the depths below, no words can express. There was a certain king of Kent in the seventh century who could not write. Imagine bachelors of theology discussing before an audience of wagoners, not Parisian wagoners, but such as survive in Auvergne or in the Vosges. Among these clerks, who think like studious scholars in accordance with their favorite authors, and are doubly separated from the world as scholars and monks, Alfred alone, by his position as a layman and a practical man, descends in his Saxon translations and his Saxon verses to the common level; and we have seen that his effort, like that of Charlemagne, was fruitless. There was an impassable wall between the old learned literature and the present chaotic barbarism. Incapable, yet compelled, to fit into the ancient mould, they gave it a twist. Unable to reproduce ideas, they reproduced a metre. They tried to eclipse their rivals in versification by the refinement of their composition, and the prestige of a difficulty overcome. So, in our own colleges, the good scholars imitate the clever divisions and symmetry of Claudian rather than the ease and variety of Vergil. They put their feet in irons, and showed their smartness by running in shackles; they weighted themselves with rules of modern rhyme and rules of ancient metre; they added the necessity of beginning each verse with the same letter that began the last. A few, like Adhelm, wrote square acrostics, in which the first line, repeated at the end, was found also to the left and right of the piece. Thus made up of the first and last letters of each verse, it forms a border to the whole piece, and the morsel of verse is like a piece of tapestry. Strange literary tricks, which changed the poet into an artisan. They bear witness to the difficulties which

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then impeded culture and nature, and spoiled at once the Latin form and the Saxon genius.

Beyond this barrier, which drew an impassable line between civilization and barbarism, there was another, no less impassable, between the Latin and Saxon genius. The strong German imagination, in which glowing and obscure visions suddenly meet and abruptly overflow, was in contrast with the reasoning spirit, in which ideas gather and are developed only in a regular order; so that if the barbarian, in his classical attempts, retained any part of his primitive instincts, he succeeded only in producing a grotesque and frightful monster. One of them, this very Adhelm, a relative of King Ina, who sang on the town-bridge profane and sacred hymns alternately, too much imbued with Saxon poesy, simply to imitate the antique models, adorned his Latin prose and verse with all the "English magnificence."[5] You might compare him to a barbarian who seizes a flute from the skilled hands of a player of Augustus's court, in order to blow on it with inflated lungs, as if it were the bellowing horn of an aurochs. The sober speech of the Roman orators and senators becomes in his hands full of exaggerated and incoherent images; he violently connects words, uniting them in a sudden and extravagant manner; he heaps up his colors, and utters extraordinary and unintelligible nonsense, like that of the later Skalds; in short, he is a latinized Skald, dragging into his new tongue the ornaments of Scandinavian poetry, such as alliteration, by dint of which he congregates in one of his epistles fifteen consecutive words, all beginning with the same letter; and in order to make up his fifteen, he introduces a barbarous Græcism amongst the Latin words.[6] Amongst the others, the writers of legends, you will meet many times with deformation of Latin, distorted by the outburst of a too vivid imagination; it breaks out even in their scholastic and scientific writing. Here is part of a dialogue between Alcuin and prince Pepin, a son of Charlemagne, and he uses like formulas the little poetic and bold phrases which abound in the national poetry. "What is winter? the banishment of summer. What is spring? the

[5] William of Malmesbury's expression.

[6] Primitus (pantorum procerum prætorumque pio potissimum paternoque præsertim privilegio) panegyricum poematque passim prosatori sub polo promulgantes, stridula vocum symphonia ac melodiæ cantile, næque carmine modulaturi hymnizemus.

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painter of the earth. What is the year? the world's chariot. What is the sun? the splendor of the world, the beauty of heaven, the grace of nature, the honor of day, the distributor of the hours. What is the sea? the path of audacity, the boundary of the earth, the receptacle of the rivers, the fountain of showers." More, he ends his instructions with enigmas, in the spirit of the Skalds, such as we still find in the old manuscripts with the barbarian songs. It was the last feature of the national genius, which, when it labors to understand a matter, neglects dry, clear, consecutive deduction, to employ grotespue, remote, oft-repeated imagery, and replaces analysis by intuition.

Section VIII.—Virility of the Saxon Race

Such was this race, the last born of the sister races, which, in the decay of the other two, the Latin and the Greek, brings to the world a new civilization, with a new character and genius. Inferior to these in many respects, it surpasses them in not a few. Amidst the woods and mire and snows, under a sad, inclement sky, gross instincts have gained the day during this long barbarism. The German has not acquired gay humor, unreserved facility, the feeling for harmonious beauty; his great phlegmatic body continues savage and stiff, greedy and brutal; his rude and unpliable mind is still inclined to savagery, and restive under culture. Dull and congealed, his ideas cannot expand with facility and freedom, with a natural sequence and an instinctive regularity. But this spirit, void of the sentiment of the beautiful, is all the more apt for the sentiment of the true. The deep and incisive impression which he receives from contact with objects, and which as yet he can only express by a cry, will afterwards liberate him from the Latin rhetoric, and will vent itself on things rather than on words. Moreover, under the constraint of climate and solitude, by the habit of resistance and effort, his ideal is changed. Manly and moral instincts have gained the empire over him; and amongst them the need of independence, the disposition for serious and strict manners, the inclination for devotion and veneration, the worship of heroism. Here are the foundations and the elements of a civilization, slower but sounder, less careful of what is

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agreeable and elegant, more based on justice and truth.[7] Hitherto at least the race is intact, intact in its primitive coarseness; the Roman cultivation could neither develop nor deform it. If Christianity took root, it was owing to natural affinities, but it produced no change in the native genius. Now approaches a new conquest, which is to bring this time men, as well as ideas. The Saxons, meanwhile, after the wont of German races, vigorous and fertile, have within the past six centuries multiplied enormously. They were now about two millions, and the Norman army numbered sixty thousand.[8] In vain these Normans become transformed, gallicized; by their origin, and substantially in themselves they are still the relatives of those whom they conquered. In vain they imported their manners and their poesy, and introduced into the language a third part of its words; this language continues altogether German in element and in substance.[9] Though the grammar changed, it changed integrally, by an internal action, in the same sense as its continental cognates. At the end of three hundred years the conquerors themselves were conquered; their speech became English; and owing to frequent intermarriage, the English blood ended by gaining the predominance over the Norman blood in their veins. The race finally remains Saxon. If the old poetic genius disappears after the Conquest, it is as a river disappears, and flows for a while underground. In five centuries it will emerge once more.

[7] In Iceland, the country of the fiercest sea-kings, crimes are unknown; prisons have been turned to other uses; fines are the only punishment.

[8] Following Doomsday Book, Mr. Turner reckons at three hundred thousand the heads of families mentioned. If each family consisted of five persons, that would make one million five hundred thousand people. He adds five hundred thousand for the four northern counties, for London and several large towns, for the monks and provincial clergy not enumerated. . . . We must accept these figures with caution. Still they agree with those of Mackintosh, George Chalmers, and several others. Many facts show that the Saxon population was very numerous, and quite out of proportion to the Norman population.

[9] Warton, "History of English Poetry," 1840, 3 vols., Preface.

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CHAPTER SECOND

THE NORMANS

Section I.—The Feudal Man

A CENTURY and a half had passed on the Continent since, amid the universal decay and dissolution, a new society had been formed, and new men had risen up. Brave men had at length made a stand against the Norsemen and the robbers. They had planted their feet in the soil, and the moving chaos of the general subsidence had become fixed by the effort of their great hearts and of their arms. At the mouths of the rivers, in the defiles of the mountains, on the margin of the waste borders, at all perilous passes, they had built their forts, each for himself, each on his own land, each with his faithful band; and they had lived like a scattered but watchful army, encamped and confederate in their castles, sword in hand in front of the enemy. Beneath this discipline a formidable people had been formed, fierce hearts in strong bodies,[1] intolerant of restraint, longing for violent deeds, born for constant warfare because steeped in permanent warfare, heroes and robbers, who, as an escape from their solitude, plunged into adventures, and went, that they might conquer a country or win Paradise, to Sicily, to Portugal, to Spain, to Palestine, to England.

Section II.—Normans and Saxons Contrasted

On September 27, 1066, at the mouth of the Somme, there was a great sight to be seen; four hundred large sailing vessels, more than a thousand transports, and sixty thousand men, were

[1] See, amidst other delineations of their manners, the first accounts of the first Crusade. Godfrey clove a Saracen down to his waist. In Palestine, a widow was compelled, up to the age of sixty, to marry again, because no fief could remain without a defender. A Spanish leader said to his exhausted soldiers after a battle, "You are too weary and too much wounded, but come and fight with me against this other band; the fresh wounds which we

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on the point of embarking.[1] The sun shone splendidly after long rain; trumpets sounded, the cries of this armed multitude rose to heaven; as far as the eye could see, on the shore, in the wide-spreading river, on the sea which opens out thence broad and shining, masts and sails extended like a forest; the enormous fleet set out wafted by the south wind.[2] The people which it carried were said to have come from Norway, and they might have been taken for kinsmen of the Saxons, with whom they were to fight; but there were with them a multitude of adventurers, crowding from all quarters, far and near, from north and south, from Maine and Anjou, from Poitou and Brittany, from Ile-de-France and Flanders, from Aquitaine and Burgundy;[3] and, in short, the expedition itself was French.

How comes it that, having kept its name, it had changed its nature? and what series of renovations had made a Latin out of a German people? The reason is, that this people, when they came to Neustria, were neither a national body, nor a pure race. They were but a band; and as such, marrying the women of the country, they introduced foreign blood into their children. They were a Scandinavian band, but swelled by all the bold knaves and all the wretched desperadoes who wandered about the conquered country;[4] and as such they received foreign blood into their veins. Moreover, if the nomadic band was mixed, the settled band was much more so; and peace by its transfusions, like war by its recruits, had changed the character of the primitive blood. When Rollo, having divided the land amongst his followers, hung the thieves and their abettors, people from every country gathered to him. Security, good stern justice, were so rare, that they were enough to repeople a land.[5] He invited strangers, say the old writers, "and made one people out of so many folk of different natures." This assemblage of

shall receive will make us forget those which we have." At this time, says the General Chronicle of Spain, kings, counts, and nobles, and all the knights, that they might be ever ready, kept their horses in the chamber where they slept with their wives.

[1] For difference in numbers of the fleet and men see Freeman, "History of the Norman Conquest," 3 vols., 1867, iii. 381, 387.—Tr.

[2] For all the details see "Anglo-Norman Chronicles," iii. 4, as quoted by Aug. Thierry. I have myself seen the locality and the country.

[3] Of three columns of attack at Hastings, two were composed of auxiliaries. Moreover, the chroniclers are not at fault upon this critical point; they agree in stating that England was conquered by Frenchmen.

[4] It was a Rouen fisherman, a soldier of Rollo, who killed the Duke of France at the mouth of the Eure. Hastings, the famous sea-king, was a laborer's son from the neighborhood of Troyes.

[5] "In the tenth century," says Stendhal, "a man wished for two things: First, not to be slain; second, to have a good leather coat." See Fontenelle's "Chronicle."

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barbarians, refugees, robbers, immigrants, spoke Romance or French so quickly, that the second Duke, wishing to have his son taught Danish, had to send him to Bayeux, where it was still spoken. The great masses always form the race in the end, and generally the genius and language. Thus this people, so transformed, quickly became polished; the composite race showed itself of a ready genius, far more wary than the Saxons across the Channel, closely resembling their neighbors of Picardy, Champagne, and Ile-de-France. "The Saxons," says an old writer,[6] "vied with each other in their drinking feats, and wasted their income by day and night in feasting, whilst they lived in wretched hovels; the French and Normans, on the other hand, living inexpensively in their fine, large houses, were besides refined in their food and studiously careful in their dress." The former, still weighted by the German phlegm, were gluttons and drunkards, now and then aroused by poetical enthusiasm; the latter, made sprightlier by their transplantation and their alloy, felt the cravings of the mind already making themselves manifest. "You might see amongst them churches in every village, and monasteries in the cities, towering on high, and built in a style unknown before," first in Normandy, and later in England.[7] Taste had come to them at once—that is, the desire to please the eye, and to express a thought by outward representation, which was quite a new idea: the circular arch was raised on one or on a cluster of columns; elegant mouldings were placed about the windows; the rose window made its appearance, simple, yet, like the flower which gives it its name "*rose des buissons*"; and the Norman style unfolded itself, original yet proportioned between the Gothic, whose richness it foreshadowed, and the Romance, whose solidity it recalled.

With taste, just as natural and just as quickly, was developed the spirit of inquiry. Nations are like children; with some the tongue is readily loosened, and they comprehend at once; with others it is loosened with difficulty, and they are slow of comprehension. The men we are here speaking of had educated themselves nimbly, as Frenchmen do. They were the first in France who unravelled the language, regulating it and writing

[6] William of Malmesbury.

[7] Churches in London, Sarum, Norwich, Durham, Chichester, Peterborough, Rochester, Hereford, Gloucester, Oxford etc.—William of Malmesbury.

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it so well, that to this day we understand their codes and their poems. In a century and a half they were so far cultivated as to find the Saxons "unlettered and rude." [8] That was the excuse they made for banishing them from the abbeys and all valuable ecclesiastical offices. And, in fact, this excuse was rational, for they instinctively hated gross stupidity. Between the Conquest and the death of King John, they established five hundred and fifty-seven schools in England. Henry Beauclerk, son of the Conqueror, was trained in the sciences; so were Henry II and his three sons; Richard, the eldest of these, was a poet. Lanfranc, first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, a subtle logician, ably argued the Real Presence; Anselm, his successor, the first thinker of the age, thought he had discovered a new proof of the existence of God, and tried to make religion philosophical by adopting as his maxim, "*Crede ut intelligas.*" The notion was doubtless grand, especially in the eleventh century; and they could not have gone more promptly to work. Of course the science I speak of was but scholastic, and these terrible folios slay more understandings than they confirm. But people must begin as they can; and syllogism, even in Latin, even in theology, is yet an exercise of the mind and a proof of the understanding. Among the continental priests who settled in England, one established a library; another, founder of a school, made the scholars perform the play of Saint Catherine; a third wrote in polished Latin, "epigrams as pointed as those of Martial." Such were the recreations of an intelligent race, eager for ideas, of ready and flexible genius, whose clear thought was not clouded, like that of the Saxon brain, by drunken hallucinations and the vapors of a greedy and well-filled stomach. They loved conversations, tales of adventure. Side by side with their Latin chroniclers, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, thoughtful men already, who could not only relate, but criticise here and there, there were rhyming chronicles in the vulgar tongue, as those of Geoffroy Gaimar, Bénoît de Sainte-Maure, Robert Wace. Do not imagine that their verse-writers were sterile of words or lacking in details. They were talkers, tale-tellers, speakers above all, ready of tongue, and never stinted in speech. Not

[8] Ordericus Vitalis.

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singers by any means; they speak—this is their strong point, in their poems as in their chronicles. They were the earliest who wrote the "Song of Roland"; upon this they accumulated a multitude of songs concerning Charlemagne and his peers, concerning Arthur and Merlin, the Greeks and Romans, King Horn, Guy of Warwick, every prince and every people. Their minstrels (*trouvères*), like their knights, draw in abundance from Welsh, Franks, and Latins, and descend upon East and West in the wide field of adventure. They address themselves to a spirit of inquiry, as the Saxons to enthusiasm, and dilute in their long, clear, and flowing narratives the lively colors of German and Breton traditions; battles, surprises, single combats, embassies, speeches, processions, ceremonies, huntings, a variety of amusing events, employ their ready and wandering imaginations. At first, in the "Song of Roland," it is still kept in check; it walks with long strides, but only walks. Presently its wings have grown; incidents are multiplied; giants and monsters abound, the natural disappears, the song of the *jongleur* grows a poem under the hands of the *trouvère;* he would speak, like Nestor of old, five, even six years running, and not grow tired or stop. Forty thousand verses are not too much to satisfy their gabble; a facile mind, copious, inquisitive, descriptive, such is the genius of the race. The Gauls, their fathers, used to delay travellers on the road to make them tell their stories, and boasted, like these, "of fighting well and talking with ease."

With chivalric poetry, they are not wanting in chivalry; principally, it may be, because they are strong, and a strong man loves to prove his strength by knocking down his neighbors; but also from a desire of fame, and as a point of honor. By this one word honor the whole spirit of warfare is changed. Saxon poets painted war as a murderous fury, as a blind madness which shook flesh and blood, and awakened the instincts of the beast of prey; Norman poets describe it as a tourney. The new passion which they introduce is that of vanity and gallantry; Guy of Warwick dismounts all the knights in Europe, in order to deserve the hand of the prude and scornful Félice. The tourney itself is but a ceremony, somewhat brutal I admit, since it turns upon the breaking of arms and limbs,

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but yet brilliant and French. To show skill and courage, display the magnificence of dress and armor, be applauded by and please the ladies—such feelings indicate men of greater sociality, more under the influence of public opinion, less the slaves of their own passions, void both of lyric inspiration and savage enthusiasm, gifted by a different genius, because inclined to other pleasures.

Such were the men who at this moment were disembarking in England to introduce their new manners and a new spirit, French at bottom, in mind and speech, though with special and provincial features; of all the most matter-of-fact, with an eye to the main chance, calculating, having the nerve and the dash of our own soldiers, but with the tricks and precautions of lawyers; heroic undertakers of profitable enterprises; having gone to Sicily and Naples, and ready to travel to Constantinople or Antioch, so it be to take a country or bring back money; subtle politicians, accustomed in Sicily to hire themselves to the highest bidder, and capable of doing a stroke of business in the heat of the Crusade, like Bohémond, who, before Antioch, speculated on the dearth of his Christian allies, and would only open the town to them under condition of their keeping it for himself; methodical and persevering conquerors, expert in administration, and fond of scribbling on paper, like this very William, who was able to organize such an expedition, and such an army, and kept a written roll of the same, and who proceeded to register the whole of England in his Domesday Book. Sixteen days after the disembarkation, the contrast between the two nations was manifested at Hastings by its visible effects.

The Saxons "ate and drank the whole night. You might have seen them struggling much, and leaping and singing," with shouts of laughter and noisy joy.[9] In the morning they packed behind their palisades the dense masses of their heavy infantry, and with battle-axe hung round their neck awaited the attack. The wary Normans weighed the chances of heaven and hell, and tried to enlist God upon their side. Robert Wace, their historian and compatriot, is no more troubled by poetical imagination than they were by warlike inspiration; and on the

[9] Robert Wace, "Roman du Rou."

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eve of the battle his mind is as prosaic and clear as theirs.[10] The same spirit showed itself in the battle. They were for the most part bowmen and horsemen, well skilled, nimble, and clever. Taillefer, the *jongleur*, who asked for the honor of striking the first blow, went singing, like a true French volunteer, performing tricks all the while.[11] Having arrived before the English, he cast his lance three times in the air, then his sword, and caught them again by the handle; and Harold's clumsy foot-soldiers, who only knew how to cleave coats of mail by blows from their battle-axes, "were astonished, saying to one another that it was magic." As for William, amongst a score of prudent and cunning actions, he performed two well-calculated ones, which, in this sore embarrassment, brought him safe out of his difficulties. He ordered his archers to shoot into the air; the arrows wounded many of the Saxons in the face and one of them pierced Harold in the eye. After this he simulated flight; the Saxons, intoxicated with joy and wrath, quitted their entrenchments, and exposed themselves to the lances of his horsemen. During the remainder of the contest they only make a stand by small companies, fight with fury, and end by being slaughtered. The strong, mettlesome, brutal race threw themselves on the enemy like a savage bull; the dexterous Norman hunters wounded them adroitly, knocked them down, and placed them under the yoke.

[10] Ibid.

Et li Normanz et li Franceiz
Tote nuit firent oreisons,
Et furent en aflicions.
De lor péchiés confèz se firent
As proveires les regehirent,
Et qui n'en out proveires prèz,
A son veizin se fist confèz,
Pour ço ke samedi esteit
Ke la bataille estre debveit.
Unt Normanz a pramis e voé,
Si com li cler l'orent loé,
Ke à ce jor mez s'il veskeient,
Char ni saunc ne mangereient
Giffrei, éveske de Coustançes.
A plusors joint lor pénitances.
Cli reçut li confessions
Et dona l' béneiçons.

[11] Robert Wace, "Roman du Rou":

Taillefer ki moult bien cantout
Sur un roussin qui tot alout
Devant li dus aloit cantant
De Kalermaine e de Rolant,
E d'Oliver et des vassals
Ki moururent à Roncevals.
Quant ils orent chevalchié tant
K'as Engleis vindrent aprismant:
"Sires! dist Taillefer, merci!
Je vos ai languement servi.
Tut mon servise me debvez,
Hui, si vos plaist, me le rendez
Por tout guerredun vos requier,
Et si vos voil forment preier,
Otreiez-mei, ke jo n'i faille,
Li primier colp de la bataille."
Et li dus répont: "Je l'otrei."
Et Taillefer point à desrei;
Devant toz li altres se mist,
Un Englez féri, si l'ocist.
De sos le pis, parmie la pance,
Li fist passer ultre la lance,
A terre estendu l'abati.
Poiz trait l'espée, altre féri.
Poiz a crié: "Venez, venez!
Ke fetes-vos? Férez, férez!"
Donc l'unt Englez avironé,
Al secund colp k'il ou doné.

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Section III.—French Forms of Thought

What then is this French race, which by arms and letters make such a splendid entrance upon the world, and is so manifestly destined to rule, that in the East, for example, their name of Franks will be given to all the nations of the West? Wherein consists this new spirit, this precocious pioneer, this key of all Middle-Age civilization? There is in every mind of the kind a fundamental activity which, when incessantly repeated, moulds its plan, and gives it its direction; in town or country, cultivated or not, in its infancy and its age, it spends its existence and employs its energy in conceiving an event or an object. This is its original and perpetual process; and whether it change its region, return, advance, prolong, or alter its course, its whole motion is but a series of consecutive steps; so that the least alteration in the size, quickness, or precision of its primitive stride transforms and regulates the whole course, as in a tree the structure of the first shoot determines the whole foliage, and governs the whole growth.[1] When the Frenchman conceives an event or an object, he conceives quickly and distinctly; there is no internal disturbance, no previous fermentation of confused and violent ideas, which, becoming concentrated and elaborated, end in a noisy outbreak. The movement of his intelligence is nimble and prompt, like that of his limbs; at once and without effort he seizes upon his idea. But he seizes that alone; he leaves on one side all the long entangling offshoots whereby it is entwined and twisted amongst its neighboring ideas; he does not embarrass himself with nor think of them; he detaches, plucks, touches but slightly, and that is all. He is deprived, or if you prefer it, he is exempt from those sudden half-visions which disturb a man, and open up to him instantaneously vast deeps and far perspectives. Images are excited by internal commotion; he, not being so moved, imagines not. He is only moved superficially; he is without large sympathy; he does not perceive an object as it is, complex and combined, but in parts, with a discursive and superficial knowledge. That is why no race in Europe is less poetical. Let us look at their epics; none are more prosaic. They

[1] The idea of types is applicable throughout all physical and moral nature.

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are not wanting in number: "The Song of Roland," "Garin le Loherain," "Ogier le Danois,"[2] "Berthe aux grands Pieds." There is a library of them. Though their manners are heroic and their spirit fresh, though they have originality, and deal with grand events, yet, spite of this, the narrative is as dull as that of the babbling Norman chroniclers. Doubtless when Homer relates he is as clear as they are, and he develops as they do: but his magnificent titles of rosy-fingered Morn, the wide-bosomed Air, the divine and nourishing Earth, the earth-shaking Ocean, come in every instant and expand their purple bloom over the speeches and battles, and the grand abounding similes which interrupt the narrative tell of a people more inclined to enjoy beauty than to proceed straight to fact. But here we have facts, always facts, nothing but facts; the Frenchman wants to know if the hero will kill the traitor, the lover wed the maiden; he must not be delayed by poetry or painting. He advances nimbly to the end of the story, not lingering for dreams of the heart or wealth of landscape. There is no splendor, no color, in his narrative; his style is quite bare, and without figures; you may read ten thousand verses in these old poems without meeting one. Shall we open the most ancient, the most original, the most eloquent, at the most moving point, the "Song of Roland," when Roland is dying? The narrator is moved, and yet his language remains the same, smooth, accentless, so penetrated by the prosaic spirit, and so void of the poetic! He gives an abstract of motives, a summary of events, a series of causes for grief, a series of causes for consolation.[3] Nothing more. These men regard the circumstance or the action by itself, and adhere to this view. Their

[2] Danois is a contraction of le d'Ardennois, from the Ardennes.—Tr.

[3] Genin, "Chanson de Roland":

Co sent Rollans que la mort le trespent,
Devers la teste sur le quer li descent;
Desuz un pin i est alet curant,
Sur l'herbe verte si est culchet adenz;
Desuz lui met l'espée et l'olifan;
Turnat sa teste vers la paiene gent,
Pour co l'at fait que il voelt veirement
Que Carles diet e trestute sa gent;
Li gentilz quens, qu'il fut mort cunquérant.
Cleimet sa culpe, e menut e suvent,
Pur ses pecchez en puroffrid lo guant.
Li quens Rollans se jut desuz un pin,
Envers Espaigne en ad turnet sun vis,
De plusurs choses a remembrer le prist.
De tantes terres cume li bers cunquist,
De dulce France des humes de sun lign,
De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit.
Ne poet muer n'en plurt et ne susprit.
Mais lui meisme ne volt mettre en ubli.
Cleimet sa culpe, si priet Dieu mercit:
"Veire paterne, ki unques ne mentis,
Seint Lazaron de mort resurrexis,
Et Daniel des lions guaresis,
Guaris de mei l'arome de tuz perilz,
Pur les pecchez que en ma vie fis."
Sun destre guant à Deu en puroffrit.
Seint Gabriel de sa main l'ad pris.
Desur sun bras teneit le chef enclin,
Juntes ses mains est alet à sa fin.
Deus i tramist sun angle cherubin,
Et seint Michel qu'on cleimet del péril
Ensemble ad els seint Gabriel i vint,
L'anme del cunte portent en pareis.

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idea remains exact, clear, and simple, and does not raise up a similar image to be confused with the first, to color or transform itself. It remains dry; they conceive the divisions of the object one by one, without ever collecting them, as the Saxons would, in an abrupt, impassioned, glowing semi-vision. Nothing is more opposed to their genius than the genuine songs and profound hymns, such as the English monks were singing beneath the low vaults of their churches. They would be disconcerted by the unevenness and obscurity of such language. They are not capable of such an access of enthusiasm and such excess of emotion. They never cry out, they speak, or rather they converse, and that at moments when the soul, overwhelmed by its trouble, might be expected to cease thinking and feeling. Thus Amis, in a mystery-play, being leprous, calmly requires his friend Amille to slay his two sons, in order that their blood may heal him of his leprosy; and Amille replies still more calmly.[4] If ever they try to sing, even in heaven, "a roundelay high and clear," they will produce little rhymed arguments, as dull as the dullest talk.[5] Pursue this literature to its conclusion; regard it, like that of the Skalds, at the time of its decadence, when its vices, being exaggerated, display, like those of the Skalds, only still more strongly the kind of mind which produced it. The Skalds fall off into nonsense; it loses itself into babble and platitude. The Saxon could not master his craving for exaltation; the Frenchman could not restrain the volubility of his tongue. He is too diffuse and too clear; the Saxon is too obscure and brief. The one was excessively agitated and carried away; the other explains and develops without measure. From the twelfth century the Gestes spun out degenerate into rhapsodies and psalmodies of thirty or forty thousand verses. Theology enters into them; poetry becomes an interminable, intolerable litany, where the ideas, expounded, developed, and repeated *ad infinitum*, without one outburst of emotion or one touch of originality, flow like a clear and insipid stream, and send off their reader,

[4] Mon trés-chier ami débonnaire,
Vous m'avez une chose ditte
Qui n'est pas à faire petite
Mais que l'on doit moult resongnier.
Et nonpourquant, sanz eslongnier,
Puisque garison autrement
Ne povez avoir vraiement,
Pour vostre amour les occiray,
Et le sang vous apporteray.

[5] Vraiz Diex, moult est excellente,
Et de grant charité plaine,
Vostre bonté souveraine.
Car vostre grâce présente,
A toute personne humaine,
Vraix Diex, moult est excellente,
Puisqu'elle a cuer et entente,
Et que à ce desir l'amaine
Que de vous servir se paine.

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by dint of their monotonous rhymes, into a comfortable slumber. What a deplorable abundance of distinct and facile ideas! We meet with it again in the seventeenth century, in the literary gossip which took place at the feet of men of distinction; it is the fault and the talent of the race. With this involuntary art of perceiving, and isolating instantaneously and clearly each part of every object, people can speak, even for speaking's sake, and forever.

Such is the primitive process; how will it be continued? Here appears a new trait in the French genius, the most valuable of all. It is necessary to comprehension that the second idea shall be contiguous to the first; otherwise that genius is thrown out of its course and arrested; it cannot proceed by irregular bounds; it must walk step by step, on a straight road; order is innate in it; without study, and in the first place, it disjoints and decomposes the object or event, however complicated and entangled it may be, and sets the parts one by one in succession to each other, according to their natural connection. True, it is still in a state of barbarism; yet its intelligence is a reasoning faculty, which spreads, though unwittingly. Nothing is more clear than the style of the old French narratives and of the earliest poems: we do not perceive that we are following a narrator, so easy is the gait, so even the road he opens to us, so smoothly and gradually every idea glides into the next; and this is why he narrates so well. The chroniclers Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, the fathers of prose, have an ease and clearness approached by none, and beyond all, a charm, a grace, which they had not to go out of their way to find. Grace is a national possession in France, and springs from the native delicacy which has a horror of incongruities; the instinct of Frenchmen avoids violent shocks in works of taste as well as in works of argument; they desire that their sentiments and ideas shall harmonize, and not clash. Throughout they have this measured spirit, exquisitely refined.[6] They take care, on a sad subject, not to push emotion to its limits; they avoid big words. Think how Joinville relates in six lines the death of the poor sick priest who wished to finish celebrating the mass, and "nevermore did sing, and died." Open a mystery-play, "Théophilus," or that of the

[6] See H. Taine, "La Fontaine and His Fables," p. 15.

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" Queen of Hungary," for instance: when they are going to burn her and her child, she says two short lines about " this gentle dew which is so pure an innocent," nothing more. Take a fabliau, even a dramatic one: when the penitent knight, who has undertaken to fill a barrel with his tears, dies in the hermit's company, he asks from him only one last gift: " Do but embrace me, and then I'll die in the arms of my friend." Could a more touching sentiment be expressed in more sober language? We must say of their poetry what is said of certain pictures: This is made out of nothing. Is there in the world anything more delicately graceful than the verses of Guillaume de Lorris? Allegory clothes his ideas so as to dim their too great brightness; ideal figures, half transparent, float about the lover, luminous, yet in a cloud, and lead him amidst all the delicate and gentle-hued ideas to the rose, whose " sweet odor embalms all the plain." This refinement goes so far, that in Thibaut of Champagne and in Charles of Orléans it turns to affectation and insipidity. In them all impressions grow more slender; the perfume is so weak that one often fails to catch it; on their knees before their lady they whisper their waggeries and conceits; they love politely and wittily, they arrange ingeniously in a bouquet their " painted words," all the flowers of " fresh and beautiful language "; they know how to mark fleeting ideas in their flight, soft melancholy, vague reverie; they are as elegant as talkative, and as charming as the most amiable abbés of the eighteenth century. This lightness of touch is proper to the race, and appears as plainly under the armor and amid the massacres of the Middle Ages as mid the courtesies nd the musk-scented, wadded coats of the last court. You will find it in their coloring as in their sentiments. They are not struck by the magnificence of nature, they see only her pretty side; they paint the beauty of a woman by a single feature, which is only polite, saying, " She is more gracious than the rose in May." They do not experience the terrible emotion, ecstasy, sudden oppression of heart which is displayed in the poetry of neighboring nations; they say discreetly, " She began to smile, which vastly became her." They add, when they are in a descriptive humor, " that she had a sweet and perfumed breath," and a body " white as new-fallen snow on a branch." They do not aspire higher; beauty pleases, but does not trans-

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port them. They enjoy agreeable emotions, but are not fitted for deep sensations. The full rejuvenescence of being, the warm air of spring which renews and penetrates all existence, suggests but a pleasing couplet; they remark in passing, "Now is winter gone, the hawthorn blossoms, the rose expands," and so pass on about their business. It is a light gladsomeness, soon gone, like that which an April landscape affords. For an instant the author glances at the mist of the streams rising about the willow trees, that pleasant vapor which imprisons the brightness of the morning; then, humming a burden of a song, he returns to his narrative. He seeks amusement, and herein lies his power.

In life, as in literature, it is pleasure he aims at, not sensual pleasure or emotion. He is lively, not voluptuous; dainty, not a glutton. He takes love for a pastime, not for an intoxication. It is a pretty fruit which he plucks, tastes, and leaves. And we must remark yet further, that the best of the fruit in his eyes is the fact of its being forbidden. He says to himself that he is duping a husband, that "he deceives a cruel woman, and thinks he ought to obtain a pope's indulgence for the deed."[1] He wishes to be merry—it is the state he prefers, the end and aim of his life; and especially to laugh at other people. The short verse of his fabliaux gambols and leaps like a schoolboy released from school, over all things respected or respectable; criticising the Church, women, the great, the monks. Scoffers, banterers, our fathers have abundance both of expression and matter; and the matter comes to them so naturally, that without culture, and surrounded by coarseness, they are as delicate in their raillery as the most refined. They touch upon ridicule lightly, they mock without emphasis, as it were innocently; their style is so harmonious, that at first sight we make a mistake, and do not see any harm in it. They seem artless; they look so very demure; only a word shows the imperceptible smile: it is the ass, for example, which they call the high priest, by reason of his padded cassock and his serious air, and who gravely begins "to play the organ." At the close of the history, the delicate sense of comicality has touched you, though you cannot say how. They do not call things by their names, especially in love matters; they let you

[1] La Fontaine, "Contes, Richard Minutolo."

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guess it; they assume that you are as sharp and knowing as themselves.[8] A man might discriminate, embellish at times, perhaps refine upon them, but their first traits are incomparable. When the fox approaches the raven to steal the cheese, he begins as a hypocrite, piously and cautiously, and as one of the family. He calls the raven his "good father Don Rohart, who sings so well"; he praises his voice, "so sweet and fine." "You would be the best singer in the world if you kept clear of nuts." Reynard is a rogue, an artist in the way of invention, not a mere glutton; he loves roguery for its own sake; he rejoices in his superiority, and draws out his mockery. When Tibert, the cat, by his counsel hung himself at the bell-rope, wishing to ring it, he uses irony, enjoys and relishes it, pretends to wax impatient with the poor fool whom he has caught, calls him proud, complains because the other does not answer, and because he wishes to rise to the clouds and visit the saints. And from beginning to end this long epic of Reynard the Fox is the same; the raillery never ceases, and never fails to be agreeable. Reynard has so much wit that he is pardoned for everything. The necessity for laughter is national—so indigenous to the French, that a stranger cannot understand, and is shocked by it. This pleasure does not resemble physical joy in any respect, which is to be despised for its grossness; on the contrary, it sharpens the intelligence, and brings to light many a delicate or ticklish idea. The fabliaux are full of truths about men, and still more about women, about people of low rank, and still more about those of high rank; it is a method of philosophizing by stealth and boldly, in spite of conventionalism, and in opposition to the powers that be. This taste has nothing in common either with open satire, which is offensive because it is cruel; on the contrary, it provokes good humor. We soon see that the jester is not ill-disposed, that he does not wish to wound: if he stings, it is as a bee, without venom; an instant later he is not thinking of it; if need be, he will take himself as an object of his pleasantry; all he wishes is to keep up in himself and in us sparkling and pleasing ideas. Do we not see here in advance an abstract of the whole French literature, the incapacity for great poetry, the sudden and durable per-

[8] Parler lui veut d'une besogne
Où crois que peu conquerrérois
Si la besogne vous nommois.

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fection of prose, the excellence of all the moods of conversation and eloquence, the reign and tyranny of taste and method, the art and theory of development and arrangement, the gift of being measured, clear, amusing, and piquant? We have taught Europe how ideas fall into order, and which ideas are agreeable; and this is what our Frenchmen of the eleventh century are about to teach their Saxons during five or six centuries, first with the lance, next with the stick, next with the birch.

Section IV.—The Normans in England

Consider, then, this Frenchman or Norman, this man from Anjou or Maine, who in his well-knit coat of mail, with sword and lance, came to seek his fortune in England. He took the manor of some slain Saxon, and settled himself in it with his soldiers and comrades, gave them land, houses, the right of levying taxes, on condition of their fighting under him and for him, as men-at-arms, marshals, standard-bearers; it was a league in case of danger. In fact, they were in a hostile and conquered country, and they have to maintain themselves. Each one hastened to build for himself a place of refuge, castle or fortress,[1] well fortified, of solid stone, with narrow windows, strengthened with battlements, garrisoned by soldiers, pierced with loopholes. Then these men went to Salisbury, to the number of sixty thousand, all holders of land, having at least enough to maintain a man with horse or arms. There, placing their hands in William's they promised him fealty and assistance; and the king's edict declared that they must be all united and bound together like brothers in arms, to defend and succor each other. They are an armed colony, stationary, like the Spartans amongst the Helots; and they make laws accordingly. When a Frenchman is found dead in any district, the inhabitants are to give up the murderer, or failing to do so, they must pay forty-seven marks as a fine; if the dead man is English, it rests with the people of the place to prove it by the oath of four near relatives of the deceased. They are to beware of killing a stag, boar, or fawn; for an offence against the forest-laws they will lose their eyes. They have nothing of

[1] At King Stephen's death there were 1,115 castles.

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all their property assured to them except as alms, or on condition of paying tribute, or by taking the oath of allegiance. Here a free Saxon proprietor is made a body-slave on his own estate.[2] Here a noble and rich Saxon lady feels on her shoulder the weight of the hand of a Norman valet, who is become by force her husband or her lover. There were Saxons of one sol, or of two sols, according to the sum which they gained for their masters; they sold them, hired them, worked them on joint account, like an ox or an ass. One Norman abbot has his Saxon predecessors dug up, their bones thrown without the gates. Another keeps men-at-arms, who bring his recalcitrant monks to reason by blows of their swords. Imagine, if you can, the pride of these new lords, conquerors, strangers, masters, nourished by habits of violent activity, and by the savagery, ignorance, and passions of feudal life. "They thought they might do whatsoever they pleased," say the old chroniclers. "They shed blood indiscriminately, snatched the morsel of bread from the mouth of the wretched, and seized upon all the money, the goods, the land."[3] Thus "all the folk in the low country were at great pains to seem humble before Ivo Taillebois, and only to address him with one knee on the ground; but although they made a point of paying him every honor, and giving him all and more than all which they owed him in the way of rent and service, he harassed, tormented, tortured, imprisoned them, set his dogs upon their cattle, . . . broke the legs and backbones of their beasts of burden, . . . and sent men to attack their servants on the road with sticks and swords."[4] The Normans would not and could not borrow any idea or custom from such boors;[5] they despised them as coarse and stupid. They stood amongst them, as the Spaniards amongst the Americans in the sixteenth century, superior in force and culture, more versed in letters, more expert in the arts of luxury. They preserved their manners and their speech. England, to all outward appearance—the court of the king, the castles of the nobles, the palaces of the bishops, the houses of the wealthy—was French; and the Scandinavian

[2] A. Thierry, "Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre," ii.
[3] William of Malmesbury. A. Thierry, ii. 20, 122-203.
[4] A. Thierry.
[5] "In the year 652," says Warton, i. 3, "it was the common practice of the Anglo-Saxons to send their youth to the monasteries of France for education; and not only the language but the manners of the French were esteemed the most polite accomplishments."

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people, of whom sixty years ago the Saxon kings used to have poems sung to them, thought that the nation had forgotten its language, and treated it in their laws as though it were no longer their sister.

It was a French literature, then, which was at this time domiciled across the channel,[6] and the conquerors tried to make it purely French, purged from all Saxon alloy. They made such a point of this that the nobles in the reign of Henry II sent their sons to France, to preserve them from barbarisms. "For two hundred years," says Higden,[7] "children in scole, agenst the usage and manir of all other nations beeth compelled for to leve hire own langage, and for to construe hir lessons and hire thynges in Frensche." The statutes of the universities obliged the students to converse either in French or Latin. "Gentilmen children beeth taught to speke Frensche from the tyme that they bith rokked in hire cradell; and uplondissche men will likne himself to gentylmen, and fondeth with greet besynesse for to speke Frensche." Of course the poetry is French. The Norman brought his minstrel with him; there was Taillefer, the *jongleur*, who sang the "Song of Roland" at the battle of Hastings; there was Adeline, the *jongleuse*, received an estate in the partition which followed the Conquest. The Norman who ridicules the Saxon kings, who dug up the Saxon saints and cast them without the walls of the church, loved none but French ideas and verses. It was into French verse that Robert Wace rendered the legendary history of the England which was conquered, and the actual history of the Normandy in which he continued to live. Enter one of the abbeys where the minstrels come to sing, "where the clerks after dinner and supper read poems, the chronicles of kingdoms, the wonders of the world,"[8] you will only find Latin or French verses, Latin or French prose. What becomes of English? Obscure, despised, we hear it no more, except in the mouths of degraded franklins, outlaws of the forest, swineherds, peasants, the lowest orders. It is no longer, or scarcely written; gradually we find in the Saxon Chronicle that the idiom alters, is

[6] Warton, i. 5.

[7] Trevisa's translation of the Polycronycon.

[8] Statutes of foundation of New College, Oxford. In the abbey of Glastonbury, in 1247: Liber de excidio Trojæ, gesta Ricardi regis, gesta Alexandri Magni, etc. In the abbey of Peterborough: Amys et Amelion, Sir Tristam, Guy de Bourgogne, gesta Otuclis les prophéties de Merlin, le Charlemagne de Turpin, la destruction de Troie, etc. Warton, ibid.

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extinguished; the Chronicle itself ceases within a century after the Conquest.[9] The people who have leisure or security enough to read or write are French; for them authors devise and compose; literature always adapts itself to the taste of those who can appreciate and pay for it. Even the English[10] endeavor to write in French: thus Robert Grostête, in his allegorical poem on Christ; Peter Langtoft, in his "Chronicle of England," and in his "Life of Thomas à Becket"; Hugh de Rotheland, in his poem of "Hippomedon"; John Hoveden, and many others. Several write the first half of the verse in English, and the second in French; a strange sign of the ascendancy which is moulding and oppressing them. Even in the fifteenth century[11] many of these poor folk are employed in this task; French is the language of the court, from it arose all poetry and elegance; he is but a clodhopper who is inapt at that style. They apply themselves to it as our old scholars did to Latin verses; they are gallicized as those were latinized, by constraint, with a sort of fear, knowing well that they are but schoolboys and provincials. Gower, one of their best poets, at the end of his French works, excuses himself humbly for not having "*de Français la faconde. Pardonnez moi,*" he says, "*que de ce je forsvoie; je suis Anglais.*"

And yet, after all, neither the race nor the tongue has perished. It is necessary that the Norman should learn English, in order to command his tenants; his Saxon wife speaks it to him, and his sons receive it from the lips of their nurse; the contagion is strong, for he is obliged to send them to France, to preserve them from the jargon which on his domain threatens to overwhelm and spoil them. From generation to generation the contagion spreads; they breathe it in the air, with the foresters in the chase, the farmers in the field, the sailors on the ships: for these coarse people, shut in by their animal existence, are not the kind to learn a foreign language; by the simple weight of their dullness they impose their idiom on their conquerors, at all events such words as pertain to living things. Scholarly speech, the language of law, abstract and philosophical expressions—in short, all words depending on reflection and culture may be French, since there is nothing to prevent it. This is just what

[9] In 1154.
[10] Warton, i. 72-78.
[11] In 1400. Warton, ii. 248. Gower died in 1408; his French ballads belong to the end of the fourteenth century.

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happens; these kind of ideas and this kind of speech are not understood by the commonalty, who, not being able to touch them, cannot change them. This produces a French, a colonial French, doubtless perverted, pronounced with closed mouth, with a contortion of the organs of speech, "after the school of Stratford-atte-Bow"; yet it is still French. On the other hand, as regards the speech employed about common actions and visible objects, it is the people, the Saxons, who fix it; these living words are too firmly rooted in his experience to allow of being parted with, and thus the whole substance of the language comes from him. Here, then, we have the Norman who, slowly and constrainedly, speaks and understands English, a deformed, gallicized English, yet English, in sap and root; but he has taken his time about it, for it has required two centuries. It was only under Henry III that the new tongue is complete, with the new constitution; and that, after the like fashion, by alliance and intermixture; the burgesses come to take their seats in Parliament with the nobles, at the same time that Saxon words settle down in the language side by side with French words.

Section V.—The English Tongue.—Early English Literary Impulses

So was modern English formed, by compromise, and the necessity of being understood. But we can well imagine that these nobles, even while speaking the rising dialect, have their hearts full of French tastes and ideas; France remains the home of their mind, and the literature which now begins, is but translation. Translators, copyists, imitators—there is nothing else. England is a distant province, which is to France what the United States were, thirty years ago, to Europe: she exports her wool, and imports her ideas. Open the "Voyage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville," [1] the oldest prose-writer, the Villehardouin of the country: his book is but the translation of a translation.[2] He writes first in Latin, the language of scholars; then

[1] He wrote in 1356, and died in 1372.

[2] "And for als moche as it is longe time passed that ther was no generalle Passage ne Vyage over the See, and many Men desiren for to here speke of the holy Lond, and han thereof gret Solace and Comfort, I, John Maundevylle, Knyght, alle be it I be not worthi, that was born in Englond, in the town of Seynt-Albones, passed the See in the Zeer of our Lord Jesu-Crist 1322, in the Day of Seynt Michelle, and hidreto have been longe tyme over the See, and have seyn and gon thorghe manye dyverse londes, and many Provynces, and Kingdomes, and Iles.

"And zee shulle undirstonde that I have put this Boke out of Latyn into

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in French, the language of society; finally he reflects, and discovers that the barons, his compatriots, by governing the Saxon churls, have ceased to speak their own Norman, and that the rest of the nation never knew it; he translates his manuscript into English, and, in addition, takes care to make it plain, feeling that he speaks to less expanded understandings. He says in French: "*Il advint une fois que Mahomet allait dans une chapelle où il y avait un saint ermite. Il entra en la chapelle où il y avait une petite huisserie et basse, et était bien petite la chapelle; et alors devint la porte si grande qu'il semblait que ce fut la porte d'un palais.*"

He stops, corrects himself, wishes to explain himself better for his readers across the Channel, and says in English: "And at the Desertes of Arabye, he wente into a Chapelle where a Eremyte duelte. And whan he entred in to the Chapelle that was but a lytille and a low thing, and had but a lytill Dore and a low, than the Entree began to wexe so gret and so large, and so highe, as though it had ben of a gret Mynstre, or the Zate of a Paleys."[3] You perceive that he amplifies, and thinks himself bound to clinch and drive in three or four times in succession the same idea, in order to get it into an English brain; his thought is drawn out, dulled, spoiled in the process. Like every copy, the new literature is mediocre, and repeats what it imitates, with fewer merits and greater faults.

Let us see, then, what our Norman baron gets translated for him; first, the chronicles of Geoffroy Gaimar and Robert Wace, which consist of the fabulous history of England continued up to their day, a dull-rhymed rhapsody, turned into English in a rhapsody no less dull. The first Englishman who attempts it is Layamon,[4] a monk of Ernely, still fettered in the old idiom, who sometimes happens to rhyme, sometimes fails; altogether

Frensche, and translated it azen out of Frensche, into Englyssche, that every Man of my Nacioun may undirstonde it."—Sir John Maundeville's "Voyage and Travaile," ed. Halliwell, 1866, prologue, p. 4.

[3] Sir John Maundeville's "Voyage and Travaile," ed. Halliwell, 1866, xii., p. 139. It is confessed that the original on which Wace depended for his ancient "History of England" is the Latin compilation of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

[4] Extract from the account of the proceedings at Arthur's coronation given by Layamon, in his translation of Wace, executed about 1180. Madden's "Layamon," 1847, ii. p. 625 et passim:

Tha the king igeten hafde
And al his mon-weorede,
Tha bugen ut of burhge
Theines swithe balde.
Alle tha kinges,
And heore here-thringes.
Alle tha biscopes,
And alle tha clærckes,
All the eorles,
And alle tha beornes.
Alle the theines,
Alle the sweines,

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barbarous and childish, unable to develop a continuous idea, babbling in little confused and incomplete phrases, after the fashion of the ancient Saxons; after him a monk, Robert of Gloucester,[5] and a canon, Robert of Brunne, both as insipid and clear as their French models, having become gallicized, and adopted the significant characteristics of the race, namely, the faculty and habit of easy narration, of seeing moving spectacles without deep emotion, of writing prosaic poetry, of discoursing and developing, of believing that phrases ending in the same sounds form real poetry. Our honest English versifiers, like their preceptors in Normandy and Ile-de-France, garnished with rhymes their dissertations and histories, and called them poems. At this epoch, in fact, on the Continent, the whole learning of the schools descends into the street; and Jean de Meung, in his poem of "La Rose," is the most tedious of doctors. So in England, Robert of Brunne transposes into verse the "Manuel des péchés" of Bishop Grostête; Adam Davie,[6] certain Scripture histories; Hampole[7] composes the "Pricke of Conscience." The titles alone make one yawn: what of the text?

"Mankynde mad ys do Goddus wylle,
And alle Hys byddyngus to fulfille;
For of al Hys makyng more and les,
Man most principal creature es.
Al that He made for man hit was done,
As ye schal here after sone." [8]

There is a poem! You did not think so; call it a sermon, if you will give it its proper name. It goes on, well divided, well prolonged, flowing, but void of meaning; the literature which

Feire iscrudde,
Helde geond felde.
Summe heo gunnen æruen,
Summe heo gunnen urnen,
Summe heo gunnen lepen,
Summe heo gunnen sceoten,
Summe heo wræstleden
And wither-gome makeden,
Summe heo on uelde
Pleouweden under scelde,
Summe heo driven balles
Wide geond tha feldes.
Monianes kunnes gomen
Ther heo gunnen driuen.
And wha swa mihte iwinne
Wurthscipe of his gomene,
Hine me ladde mid songe
At foren than leod kinge;
And the king, for his gomene,
Gaf him geven gode.

Alle tha quene
The icumen weoren there,
And alle tha lafdies,
Leoneden geond walles,
To bihalden the dugethen,
And that folc plæie.
This ilæste threo dæges,
Swulc gomes and swulc plæges,
Tha, at than veorthe dæie
The king gon to spekene
And agæf his goden cnihten
All heore rihten;
He gef seolver, he gæf gold,
He gef hors, he gef lond,
Castles, and clœthes eke;
His monnen he iquende.

[5] After 1297.
[6] About 1312.
[7] About 1349.
[8] Warton, ii. 36.

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surrounds and resembles it bears witness of its origin by its loquacity and its clearness.

It bears witness to it by other and more agreeable features. Here and there we find divergences more or less awkward into the domain of genius; for instance, a ballad full of quips against Richard, King of the Romans, who was taken at the battle of Lewes. Sometimes, charm is not lacking, nor sweetness either. No one has ever spoken so bright and so well to the ladies as the French of the Continent, and they have not quite forgotten this talent while settling in England. You perceive it readily in the manner in which they celebrate the Virgin. Nothing could be more different from the Saxon sentiment, which is altogther biblical, than the chivalric adoration of the sovereign Lady, the fascinating Virgin and Saint, who was the real deity of the Middle Ages. It breathes in this pleasing hymn:

"Blessed beo thu, lavedi,
Ful of hovene blisse;
Swete flur of parais,
Moder of milternisse. . . .
I-blessed beo thu, Lavedi,
So fair and so briht;
Al min hope is uppon the,
Bi day and bi nicht. . . .
Bricht and scene quen of storre,
So me liht and lere.
In this false fikele world,
So me led and steore." [9]

There is but a short and easy step between this tender worship of the Virgin and the sentiments of the court of love. The English rhymesters take it; and when they wish to praise their earthly mistresses, they borrow, here as elsewhere, the ideas and the very form of French verse. One compares his lady to all kinds of precious stones and flowers; others sing truly amorous songs, at times sensual.

"Bytuene Mershe and Aueril,
When spray biginneth to springe,
The lutel foul hath hire wyl
On hyre lud to synge,
Ich libbe in loue longinge
For semlokest of alle thynge.

[9] Time of Henry III., "Reliquiæ Antiquæ," edited by Messrs. Wright and Halliwell, i. 102.

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He may me blysse bringe,
Icham in hire baundoun.
An hendy hap ich abbe yhent,
Ichot from heuene it is me sent.
From alle wymmen my love is lent,
And lyht on Alisoun." [10]

Another sings:

" Suete lemmon, y preye the, of loue one speche,
Whil y lyue in world so wyde other nulle y seche.
With thy loue, my suete leof, mi bliss thou mihtes eche
A suete cos of thy mouth mihte be my leche." [11]

Is not this the lively and warm imagination of the south? they speak of springtime and of love, " the fine and lovely weather," like *trouvères*, even like *troubadours*. The dirty, smoke-grimed cottage, the black feudal castle, where all but the master lie higgledy-piggledy on the straw in the great stone hall, the cold rain, the muddy earth, make the return of the sun and the warm air delicious.

" Sumer is i-cumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu:
Groweth sed, and bloweth med,
And springeth the wde nu.
Sing cuccu, cuccu.
Awe bleteth after lomb,
Llouth after calue cu,
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth:
Murie sing cuccu,
Cuccu, cuccu.
Wel singes thu cuccu;
Ne swik thu nauer nu.
Sing, cuccu nu,
Sing, cuccu." [12]

Here are glowing pictures, such as Guillaume de Lorris was writing at the same time, even richer and more lifelike, perhaps because the poet found here for inspiration that love of country life which in England is deep and national. Others, more imitative, attempt pleasantries like those of Rutebeuf and the fabliaux, frank quips,[13] and even satirical, loose waggeries. Their true aim and end is to hit out at the monks. In every French country or country which imitates France, the most

[10] About 1278. Warton, i. 28.
[11] Ibid., i. 31.
[12] Ibid. i. 30.
[13] " Poem of the Owl and Nightingale," who dispute as to which has the finest voice.

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manifest use of convents is to furnish material for sprightly and scandalous stories. One writes, for instance, of the kind of life the monks lead at the abbey of Cocagne:

"There is a wel fair abbei,
Of white monkes and of grei.
Ther beth bowris and halles:
Al of pasteiis beth the wallis,
Of fleis, of fisse, and rich met,
The likfullist that man may et.
Fluren cakes beth the schingles alle.
Of cherche, cloister, boure, and halle.
The pinnes beth fat podinges
Rich met to princes and kinges. . . .
Though paradis be miri and bright
Cokaign is of fairir sight, . . .
Another abbei is ther bi,
Forsoth a gret fair nunnerie. . . .
When the someris dai is hote
The young nunnes takith a bote . . .
And doth ham forth in that river
Both with ores and with stere. . . .
And each monk him takith on,
And snellich berrith forth har prei
To the mochil grei abbei,
And techith the nunnes an oreisun,
With iamblene up and down."

This is the triumph of gluttony and feeding. Moreover many things could be mentioned in the Middle Ages which are now unmentionable. But it was the poems of chivalry, which represented to him the bright side of his own mode of life, that the baron preferred to have translated. He desired that his *trouvère* should set before his eyes the magnificence which he displayed, and the luxury and enjoyments which he has introduced from France. Life at that time, without and even during war, was a great pageant, a brilliant and tumultuous kind of fête. When Henry II travelled, he took with him a great number of horsemen, foot-soldiers, baggage-wagons, tents, pack-horses, comedians, courtesans and their overseers, cooks, confectioners, posture-makers, dancers, barbers, go-betweens, hangers-on.[14] In the morning when they start, the assemblage begins to shout, sing, hustle each other, make racket and rout, "as if hell were let

[14] Letter of Peter of Blois.

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loose." William Longchamps, even in time of peace, would not travel without a thousand horses by way of escort. When Archbishop à Becket came to France, he entered the town with two hundred knights, a number of barons and nobles, and an army of servants, all richly armed and equipped, he himself being provided with four-and-twenty suits; two hundred and fifty children walked in front, singing national songs; then dogs, then carriages, then a dozen pack-horses, each ridden by an ape and a man; then equerries with shields and war-horses; then more equerries, falconers, a suit of domestics, knights, priests; lastly, the archbishop himself, with his private friends. Imagine these processions, and also these entertainments; for the Normans, after the Conquest, "borrowed from the Saxons the habit of excess in eating and drinking."[15] At the marriage of Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cornwall, they provided thirty thousand dishes.[16] They also continued to be gallant, and punctiliously performed the great precept of the love courts; for in the Middle Ages the sense of love was no more idle than the others. Moreover, tournaments were plentiful; a sort of opera prepared for their own entertainment. So ran their life, full of adventure and adornment, in the open air and in the sunlight, with show of cavalcades and arms; they act a pageant, and act it with enjoyment. Thus the King of Scots, having come to London with a hundred knights, at the coronation of Edward I, they all dismounted, and made over their horses and superb caparisons to the people; as did also five English lords, imitating their example. In the midst of war they took their pleasure. Edward III, in one of his expeditions against the King of France, took with him thirty falconers, and made his campaign alternately hunting and fighting.[17] Another time, says Froissart, the knights who joined the army carried a plaster over one eye, having vowed not to remove it until they had performed an exploit worthy of their mistresses. Out of the very exuberancy of spirit they practised the art of poetry; out of the buoyancy of their imagination they made a sport of life. Edward III built at Windsor a hall and a round table; and at one of his tourneys in

[15] William of Malmesbury.

[16] At the installation feast of George Nevill, Archbishop of York, the brother of Guy of Warwick, there were consumed 104 oxen and 6 wild bulls, 1000 sheep, 304 calves, as many hogs, 2000 swine, 500 stags, bucks, and does, 204 kids, 22,802 wild or tame fowl, 300 quarters of corn, 300 tuns of ale, 100 of wine, a pipe of hypocras, 12 porpoises and seals.

[17] These prodigalities and refinements grew to excess under his grandson Richard II.

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London, sixty ladies, seated on palfreys, led, as in a fairy tale, each her knight by a golden chain. Was not this the triumph of the gallant and frivolous French fashions? Edward's wife Philippa sat as a model to the artists for their Madonnas. She appeared on the field of battle; listened to Froissart, who provided her with moral-plays, love-stories, and "things fair to listen to." At once goddess, heroine, and scholar, and all this so agreeably, was she not a true queen of refined chivalry? Now, as also in France under Louis of Orleans and the Dukes of Burgundy, this most elegant and romanesque civilization came into full bloom, void of common sense, given up to passion, bent on pleasure, immoral and brilliant, but, like its neighbors of Italy and Provence, for lack of serious intention, it could not last.

Of all these marvels the narrators make display in their stories. Here is a picture of the vessel which took the mother of King Richard into England:

"Swlk on ne seygh they never non;
All it was whyt of huel-bon,
And every nayl with gold begrave:
Off pure gold was the stave.
Her mast was of yvory;
Off samyte the sayl wytterly.
Her ropes wer off tuely sylk,
Al so whyt as ony mylk.
That noble schyp was al withoute,
With clothys of golde sprede aboute;
And her loof and her wyndas,
Off asure forsothe it was." [18]

On such subjects they never run dry. When the King of Hungary wishes to console his afflicted daughter, he proposes to take her to the chase in the following style:

"To-morrow ye shall in hunting fare:
And ride, my daughter, in a chair;
It shall be covered with velvet red,
And cloths of fine gold all about your head,
With damask white and azure blue,
Well diapered with lilies new.
Your pommels shall be ended with gold,
Your chains enamelled many a fold,
Your mantle of rich degree,
Purple pall and ermine free.

[18] Warton, i. 156.

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Jennets of Spain that ben so light,
Trapped to the ground with velvet bright.
Ye shall have harp, sautry, and song,
And other mirths you among.
Ye shall have Rumney and Malespine,
Both hippocras and Vernage wine;
Montrese and wine of Greek,
Both Algrade and despice eke,
Antioch and Bastarde,
Pyment also and garnarde;
Wine of Greek and Muscadel,
Both clare, pyment, and Rochelle,
The reed your stomach to defy,
And pots of osey set you by.
You shall have venison ybake,
The best wild fowl that may be take;
A leish of harehound with you to streek,
And hart, and hind, and other like.
Ye shall be set at such a tryst,
That hart and hynd shall come to you fist,
Your disease to drive you fro,
To hear the bugles there yblow.
Homeward thus shall ye ride,
On hawking by the river's side,
With gosshawk and with gentle falcon,
With bugle-horn and merlion.
When you come home your menie among,
Ye shall have revel, dance, and song;
Little children, great and small,
Shall sing as does the nightingale.
Then shall ye go to your evensong,
With tenors and trebles among.
Threescore of copes of damask bright,
Full of pearls they shall be pight.
Your censors shall be of gold,
Indent with azure many a fold;
Your quire nor organ song shall want,
With contre-note and descant.
The other half on organs playing,
With young children full fain singing.
Then shall ye go to your supper,
And sit in tents in green arber,
With cloth of arras pight to the ground,
With sapphires set of diamond.
A hundred knights, truly told,
Shall play with bowls in alleys cold,
Your disease to drive away;
To see the fishes in pools play,

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To a drawbridge then shall ye,
Th' one half of stone, th' other of tree;
A barge shall meet you full right,
With twenty-four oars full bright,
With trumpets and with clarion,
The fresh water to row up and down. . . .
Forty torches burning bright
At your bridge to bring you light.
Into your chamber they shall you bring,
With much mirth and more liking.
Your blankets shall be of fustian,
Your sheets shall be of cloth of Rennes.
Your head sheet shall be of pery pight,
With diamonds set and rubies bright.
When you are laid in bed so soft,
A cage of gold shall hang aloft,
With long paper fair burning,
And cloves that be sweet smelling.
Frankincense and olibanum,
That when ye sleep the taste may come;
And if ye no rest can take,
All night minstrels for you shall wake." [19]

Amid such fancies and splendors the poets delight and lose themselves, and the woof, like the embroideries of their canvas, bears the mark of this love of decoration. They weave it out of adventures, of extraordinary and surprising events. Now it is the life of King Horn, who, thrown into a boat when a lad, is wrecked upon the coast of England, and, becoming a knight, reconquers the kingdom of his father. Now it is the history of Sir Guy, who rescues enchanted knights, cuts down the giant Colbrand, challenges and kills the Sultan in his tent. It is not for me to recount these poems, which are not English, but only translations; still, here as in France, there are many of them; they fill the imagination of the young society, and they grow in exaggeration, until, falling to the lowest depth of insipidity and improbability, they are buried forever by Cervantes. What would people say of a society which had no literature but the opera with its unrealities? Yet it was a literature of this kind which formed the intellectual food of the Middle Ages. People then did not ask for truth, but entertainmnt, and that vehement and hollow, full of glare and startling events. They asked for impossible voyages, extravagant challenges, a racket of contests,

[19] Warton, i. 176, spelling modernized.

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a confusion of magnificence and entanglement of chances. For introspective history they had no liking, cared nothing for the adventures of the heart, devoted their attention to the outside. They remained children to the last, with eyes glued to a series of exaggerated and colored images, and, for lack of thinking, did not perceive that they had learnt nothing.

What was there beneath this fanciful dream? Brutal and evil human passions, unchained at first by religious fury, then delivered up to their own devices, and, beneath a show of external courtesy, as vile as ever. Look at the popular king, Richard Cœur de Lion, and reckon up his butcheries and murders: "King Richard," says a poem, "is the best king ever mentioned in song."[20] I have no objection; but if he has the heart of a lion, he has also that brute's appetite. One day, under the walls of Acre, being convalescent, he had a great desire for some pork. There was no pork. They killed a young Saracen, fresh and tender, cooked and salted him, and the king ate him and found him very good; whereupon he desired to see the head of the pig. The cook brought it in trembling. The king falls a-laughing, and says the army has nothing to fear from famine, having provisions ready at hand. He takes the town, and presently Saladin's ambassadors come to sue for pardon for the prisoners. Richard has thirty of the most noble beheaded, and bids his cook boil the heads, and serve one to each ambassador, with a ticket bearing the name and family of the dead man. Meanwhile, in their presence, he eats his own with a relish, bids them tell Saladin how the Christians make war, and ask him if it is true that they fear him. Then he orders the sixty thousand prisoners to be led into the plain:

> "They were led into the place full even.
> There they heard angels of heaven;
> They said: 'Seigneures, tuez, tuez!
> Spares hem nought, and beheadeth these!'
> King Richard heard the angels' voice,
> And thanked God and the holy cross."

Thereupon they behead them all. When he took a town, it was his wont to murder everyone, even children and women. Such was the devotion of the Middle Ages, not only in romances,

[20] Warton, i. 123:
"In Fraunce these rhymes were wroht,
Every Englyshe ne knew it not."

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as here, but in history. At the taking of Jerusalem the whole population, seventy thousand persons, were massacred.

Thus even in chivalrous stories the fierce and unbridled instincts of the bloodthirsty brute break out. The authentic narratives show it. Henry II, irritated at a page, attempted to tear out his eyes.[21] John Lackland let twenty-three hostages die in prison of hunger. Edward II caused at one time twenty-eight nobles to be hanged and disemboweled, and was himself put to death by the insertion of a red-hot iron into his bowels. Look in Froissart for the debaucheries and murders in France as well as in England, of the Hundred Years' War, and then for the slaughters of the Wars of the Roses. In both countries feudal independence ended in civil war, and the Middle Age founders under its vices. Chivalrous courtesy, which cloaked the native ferocity, disappears like some hangings suddenly consumed by the breaking out of a fire; at that time in England they killed nobles in preference, and prisoners, too, even children, with insults, in cold blood. What, then, did man learn in this civilization and by this literature? How was he humanized? What precepts of justice, habits of reflection, store of true judgments, did this culture interpose between his desires and his actions, in order to moderate his passion? He dreamed, he imagined a sort of elegant ceremonial in order the better to address lords and ladies; he discovered the gallant code of little Jehan de Saintré. But where is the true education? Wherein has Froissart profited by all his vast experience? He was a fine specimen of a babbling child; what they called his poesy, the *poésie-neuve*, is only a refined gabble, a senile puerility. Some rhetoricians, like Christine de Pisan, try to round their periods after an ancient model; but all their literature amounts to nothing. No one can think. Sir John Maundeville, who travelled all over the world a hundred and fifty years after Villehardouin, is as contracted in his ideas as Villehardouin himself. Extraordinary legends and fables, every sort of credulity and ignorance, abound in his book. When he wishes to explain why Palestine has passed into the hands of various possessors instead of continuing under one government, he says that it is because God would not that it should continue longer in the hands of traitors and sinners, whether Christians or others. He has seen at Jerusalem, on the

[21] See Lingard's "History," ii. 55, note 4.—Tr.

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steps of the temple, the footmarks of the ass which our Lord rode on Palm Sunday. He describes the Ethiopians as a people who have only one foot, but so large that they can make use of it as a parasol. He instances one island " where be people as big as gyants, of 28 feet long, and have no clothing but beasts' skins "; then another island " where there are many evil and foul women, but have precious stones in their eyes, and have such force that if they behold any man with wrath, they slay him with beholding, as the basilisk doth." The good man relates; that is all: doubt and common-sense scarcely exist in the world he lives in. He has neither judgment nor reflection; he piles facts one on top of another, with no further connection; his book is simply a mirror which reproduces recollections of his eyes and ears. " And all those who will say a Pater and an Ave Maria in my behalf, I give them an interest and a share in all the holy pilgrimages I ever made in my life." That is his farewell, and accords with all the rest. Neither public morality nor public knowledge has gained anything from these three centuries of culture. This French culture, copied in vain throughout Europe, has but superficially adorned mankind, and the varnish with which it decked them is already tarnished everywhere or scales off. It was worse in England, where the thing was more superficial and the application worse than in France, where foreign hands laid it on, and where it could only half cover the Saxon crust, where that crust was worn away and rough. That is the reason why, during three centuries, throughout the whole first feudal age, the literature of the Normans in England, made up of imitations, translations, and clumsy copies, ends in nothing.

Section VI.— Feudal Civilization

Meantime, what has become of the conquered people? Has the old stock, on which the brilliant Continental flowers were grafted, engendered no literary shoot of its own? Did it continue barren during all this time under the Norman axe, which stripped it of all its buds? It grew very feebly, but it grew nevertheless. The subjugated race is not a dismembered nation, dislocated, uprooted, sluggish, like the populations of the Continent, which, after the long Roman oppression, were given up to the unrestrained invasion of barbarians; it increased, remained

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fixed in its own soil, full of sap: its members were not displaced; it was simply lopped in order to receive on its crown a cluster of foreign branches. True, it had suffered, but at last the wound closed, the saps mingled. Even the hard, stiff ligatures with which the Conqueror bound it, henceforth contributed to its fixity and vigor. The land was mapped out; every title verified, defined in writing;[1] every right or tenure valued; every man registered as to his locality, and also his condition, duties, descent, and resources, so that the whole nation was enveloped in a network of which not a mesh would break. Its future development had to be within these limits. Its constitution was settled, and in this positive and stringent enclosure men were compelled to unfold themselves and to act. Solidarity and strife; these were the two effects of the great and orderly establishment which shaped and held together, on one side the aristocracy of the conquerors, on the other the conquered people; even as in Rome the systematic fusing of conquered peoples into the plebs, and the constrained organization of the patricians in contrast with the plebs, enrolled the private individuals in two orders, whose opposition and union formed the state. Thus, here as in Rome, the national character was moulded and completed by the habit of corporate action, the respect for written law, political and practical aptitude, the development of combative and patient energy. It was the Domesday Book which, binding this young society in a rigid discipline, made of the Saxon the Englishman of our own day.

Gradually and slowly, amidst the gloomy complainings of the chroniclers, we find the new man fashioned by action, like a child who cries because steel stays, though they improve his figure, give him pain. However reduced and downtrodden the Saxons were, they did not all sink into the populace. Some,[2] almost in every county, remained lords of their estates, on the condition of doing homage for them to the king. Many became vassals of Norman barons, and remained proprietors on this condition. A greater number became socagers, that is, free proprietors, burdened with a tax, but possessed of the right of alienating their

[1] Domesday Book. Froude's "History of England," 1858, i. 13: "Through all these arrangements a single aim is visible, that every man in England should have his definite place and definite duty assigned to him, and that no human being should be at liberty to lead at his own pleasure an unaccountable existence. The discipline of an army was transferred to the details of social life."

[2] Domesday Book, "tenants-in-chief."

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property; and the Saxon villeins found patrons in these, as the plebs formerly did in the Italian nobles who were transplanted to Rome. The patronage of the Saxons who preserved their integral position was effective, for they were not isolated: marriages from the first united the two races, as it had the patricians and plebeians of Rome;[3] a Norman brother-in-law to a Saxon, defended himself in defending him. In those turbulent times, and in an armed community, relatives and allies were obliged to stand shoulder to shoulder in order to keep their ground. After all, it was necessary for the new-comers to consider their subjects, for these subjects had the heart and courage of men: the Saxons, like the plebeians at Rome, remembered their native rank and their original independence. We can recognize it in the complaints and indignation of the chroniclers, in the growling and menaces of popular revolt, in the long bitterness with which they continually recalled their ancient liberty, in the favor with which they cherished the daring and rebellion of outlaws. There were Saxon families at the end of the twelfth century who had bound themselves by a perpetual vow to wear long beards from father to son in memory of the national custom and of the old country. Such men, even though fallen to the condition of socagers, even sunk into villeins, had a stiffer neck than the wretched colonists of the Continent, trodden down and moulded by four centuries of Roman taxation. By their feelings as well as by their condition, they were the broken remains, but also the living elements, of a free people. They did not suffer the extremities of oppression. They constituted the body of the nation, the laborious, courageous body which supplied its energy. The great barons felt that they must rely upon them in their resistance to the king. Very soon, in stipulating for themselves, they stipulated for all freemen,[4] even for merchants and villeins. Thereafter "No merchant shall be dispossessed of his merchandise, no villein of the instruments of his labor; no freeman, merchant, or villein shall be taxed unreasonably for a small crime; no freeman shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or disseized of his

[3] According to Ailred (temp. Hen. II), "a king, many bishops and abbots, many great earls and noble knights descended both from English and Norman blood, constituted a support to the one and an honor to the other." "At present," says another author of the same period, "as the English and Normans dwell together, and have constantly intermarried, the two nations are so completely mingled together, that at least as regards freemen, one can scarcely distinguish who is Norman and who English. . . . The villeins attached to the soil," he says again, "are alone of pure Saxon blood."

[4] Magna Charta, 1215.

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land, or outlawed, or destroyed in any manner, but by the lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land." Thus protected they raise themselves and act. In each county there was a court, where all freeholders, small or great, came to deliberate about the municipal affairs, administer justice, and appoint tax-assessors. The red-bearded Saxon, with his clear complexion and great white teeth, came and sat by the Norman's side; these were franklins like the one whom Chaucer describes:

"A Frankelein was in this compagnie;
White was his berd, as is the dayesie.
Of his complexion he was sanguin,
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in win.
To liven in delit was ever his wone,
For he was Epicures owen sone,
That held opinion that plein delit
Was verailly felicite parfite.
An housholder, and that a grete was he,
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His brede, his ale, was alway after on;
A better envyned man was no wher non.
Withouten bake mete never his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of all deintees that men coud of thinke;
After the sondry sesons of the yere,
So changed he his mete and his soupere.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a breme, and many a luce in stewe.
Wo was his coke but if his sauce were
Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere.
His table, dormant in his halle alway
Stode redy covered alle the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful often time he was knight of the shire.
An anelace and a gipciere all of silk,
Heng at his girdle, white as morwe milk.
A shereve hadde he ben, and a contour.
Was no wher swiche a worthy vavasour." [5]

With him occasionally in the assembly, oftenest among the audience, were the yeomen, farmers, foresters, tradesmen, his fellow-countrymen, muscular and resolute men, not slow in the defence of their property, and in supporting him who would take

[5] "Chaucer's Works," ed. Sir H. Nicholas, 6 vols., 1845, "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," ii. p. 11, line 333.

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their cause in hand, with voice, fist and weapons. Is it likely that the discontent of such men to whom the following description applies could be overlooked?

"The Miller was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful bigge he was of braun and eke of bones;
That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
At wrastling he wold bere away the ram.
He was short shuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,
And therto brode, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A wert, and thereon stode a tufte of heres,
Rede as the bristles of a sowes eres:
His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.
A swerd and bokeler bare he by his side.
His mouth as wide was as a forneis,
He was a jangler and a goliardeis,
And that was most of sinne, and harlotries.
Wel coude he stelen corne and tollen thries.
And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soune,
And therwithall he brought us out of toune." [6]

Those are the athletic forms, the square build, the jolly John Bulls of the period, such as we yet find them, nourished by meat and porter, sustained by bodily exercise and boxing. These are the men we must keep before us, if we will understand how political liberty has been established in this country. Gradually they find the simple knights, their colleagues in the county court, too poor to be present with the great barons at the royal assemblies, coalescing with them. They become united by community of interests, by similarity of manners, by nearness of condition; they take them for their representatives, they elect them.[7] They have now entered upon public life, and the advent of a new reinforcement gives them a perpetual standing in their changed condition. The towns laid waste by the Conquest are gradually repeopled. They obtain or exact charters; the townsmen buy themselves out of the arbitrary taxes that

[6] Prologue to "The Canterbury Tales," ii. p. 17, line 547.

[7] From 1214, and also in 1225 and 1254. Guizot, "Origin of the Representative System in England," pp. 297-299.

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were imposed on them; they get possession of the land on which their houses are built; they unite themselves under mayors and aldermen. Each town now, within the meshes of the great feudal net, is a power. The Earl of Leicester, rebelling against the king, summons two burgesses from each town to Parliament,[8] to authorize and support him. From that time the conquered race, both in country and town, rose to political life. If they were taxed, it was with their consent; they paid nothing which they did not agree to. Early in the fourteenth century their united deputies composed the House of Commons; and already, at the close of the preceding century, the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in the name of the king, said to the pope, "It is the custom of the kingdom of England, that in all affairs relating to the state of this kingdom, the advice of all who are interested in them should be taken."

Section VII.—Persistence of Saxon Ideas

If they have acquired liberties, it is because they have obtained them by force; circumstances have assisted, but character has done more. The protection of the great barons and the alliance of the plain knights have strengthened them; but it was by their native roughness and energy that they maintained their independence. Look at the contrast they offer at this moment to their neighbors. What occupies the mind of the French people? The fabliaux, the naughty tricks of Reynard, the art of deceiving Master Isengrin, of stealing his wife, of cheating him out of his dinner, of getting him beaten by a third party without danger to one's self; in short, the triumph of poverty and cleverness over power united to folly. The popular hero is already the artful plebeian, chaffing, light-hearted, who, later on, will ripen into Panurge and Figaro, not apt to withstand you to your face, too sharp to care for great victories and habits of strife, inclined by the nimbleness of his wit to dodge round an obstacle; if he but touch a man with the tip of his finger, that man tumbles into the trap. But here we have other customs: it is Robin Hood, a valiant outlaw, living free and bold in the green forest, waging frank and open war against sheriff and law.[1] If ever a man was popular in his country, it was he.

[8] In 1264.

[1] Aug. Thierry, iv. 56. Ritson's "Robin Hood," 1832.

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"It is he," says an old historian, "whom the common people love so dearly to celebrate in games and comedies, and whose history, sung by fiddlers, interests them more than any other." In the sixteenth century he still had his commemoration day, observed by all the people in the small towns and in the country. Bishop Latimer, making his pastoral tour, announced one day that he would preach in a certain place. On the morrow, proceeding to the church, he found the doors closed, and waited more than an hour before they brought him the key. At last a man came and said to him, "Syr, thys ys a busye day with us; we cannot heare you: it is Robyn Hoodes Daye. The parishe are gone abrode to gather for Robyn Hoode. . . . I was fayne there to geve place to Robyn Hoode."[2] The bishop was obliged to divest himself of his ecclesiastical garments and proceed on his journey, leaving his place to archers dressed in green, who played on a rustic stage the parts of Robin Hood, Little John, and their band. In fact, he was the national hero. Saxon in the first place and waging war against the men of law, against bishops and archbishops, whose sway was so heavy; generous, moreover, giving to a poor ruined knight clothes, horse, and money to buy back the land he had pledged to a rapacious abbot; compassionate too, and kind to the poor, enjoining his men not to injure yeomen and laborers; but above all, rash, bold, proud, who would go and draw his bow before the sheriff's eyes and to his face; ready with blows, whether to give or take. He slew fourteen out of fifteen foresters who came to arrest him; he slays the sheriff, the judge, the town gatekeeper; he is ready to slay as many more as like to come; and all this joyously, jovially, like an honest fellow who eats well, has a hard skin, lives in the open air, and revels in animal life.

"In somer when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is fulle mery in feyre foreste
To here the foulys song."

That is how many ballads begin; and the fine weather, which makes the stags and oxen butt with their horns, inspires them with the thought of exchanging blows with sword or stick. Robin dreamed that two yeomen were thrashing him, and he

[2] Latimer's "Sermons," ed. Arber, 6th Sermon, 1869, p. 173.

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wants to go and find them, angrily repelling Little John, who offers to go first:

"Ah John, by me thou settest noe store,
And that I farley finde:
How offt send I my men before,
And tarry myselfe behinde?

"It is no cunnin a knave to ken,
An a man but heare him speake;
An it were not for bursting of my bowe,
John, I thy head wold breake." [3] . . .

He goes alone, and meets the robust yeoman, Guy of Gisborne,

"He that had neyther beene kythe nor kin,
Might have seen a full fayre fight,
To see how together these yeomen went
With blades both browne and bright,

"To see how these yeomen together they fought
Two howres of a summer's day;
Yett neither Robin Hood nor sir Guy
Them fettled to flye away." [4]

You see Guy the yeoman is as brave as Robin Hood; he came to seek him in the wood, and drew the bow almost as well as he. This old popular poetry is not the praise of a single bandit, but of an entire class, the yeomanry. "God haffe mersy on Robin Hodys solle, and saffe all god yemanry." That is how many ballads end. The brave yeoman, inured to blows, a good archer, clever at sword and stick, is the favorite. There were also, redoubtable, armed townsfolk, accustomed to make use of their arms. Here they are at work:

"'O that were a shame,' said jolly Robin,
'We being three, and thou but one,'
The pinder [5] leapt back then thirty good foot,
'Twas thirty good foot and one.

"He leaned his back fast unto a thorn,
And his foot against a stone,
And there he fought a long summer's day,
A summer's day so long.

[3] Ritson, "Robin Hood Ballads," i. iv. verses 41-48.
[4] Ibid. verses 145-152.
[5] A pinder's task was to pin the sheep in the fold, cattle in the penfold or pound (Richardson).—Tr.

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"Till that their swords on their broad bucklers
Were broke fast into their hands." [6]

Often even Robin does not get the advantage:

"'I pass not for length,' bold Arthur reply'd,
'My staff is of oke so free;
Eight foot and a half, it will knock down a calf,
And I hope it will knock down thee.'

"Then Robin could no longer forbear,
He gave him such a knock,
Quickly and soon the blood came down
Before it was ten a clock.

"Then Arthur he soon recovered himself,
And gave him such a knock on the crown,
That from every side of bold Robin Hood's head
The blood came trickling down.

"Then Robin raged like a wild boar,
As soon as he saw his own blood:
Then Bland was in hast, he laid on so fast,
As though he had been cleaving of wood.

"And about and about and about they went,
Like two wild bores in a chase,
Striving to aim each other to maim,
Leg, arm, or any other place.

"And knock for knock they lustily dealt,
Which held for two hours and more,
Till all the wood rang at every bang,
They ply'd their work so sore.

"'Hold thy hand, hold thy hand,' said Robin Hood,
'And let thy quarrel fall;
For here we may thrash our bones all to mesh,
And get no coyn at all.

"'And in the forrest of merry Sherwood,
Hereafter thou shalt be free.'
'God a mercy for nought, my freedom I bought,
I may thank my staff, and not thee.'" [7] . . .

"Who are you, then?" says Robin:

"'I am a tanner,' bold Arthur reply'd,
'In Nottingham long I have wrought;
And if thou'lt come there, I vow and swear,
I will tan thy hide for nought.'

[6] Ritson, ii. 3, verses 17-26. [7] Ibid. ii. 6, verses 58-89.

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"'God a mercy, good fellow,' said jolly Robin,
'Since thou art so kind and free;
And if thou wilt tan my hide for nought,
I will do as much for thee.'" [8]

With these generous offers, they embrace; a free exchange of honest blows always prepares the way for friendship. It was so Robin Hood tried Little John, whom he loved all his life after. Little John was seven feet high, and being on a bridge, would not give way. Honest Robin would not use his bow against him, but went and cut a stick seven feet long; and they agreed amicably to fight on the bridge until one should fall into the water. They fall to so merrily that "their bones ring." In the end Robin falls, and he feels only the more respect for Little John. Another time, having a sword with him, he was thrashed by a tinker who had only a stick. Full of admiration, he gives him a hundred pounds. Again he was thrashed by a potter, who refused him toll; then by a shepherd. They fight to amuse themselves. Even nowadays boxers give each other a friendly grip before setting to; they knock one another about in this country honorably, without malice, fury, or shame. Broken teeth, black eyes, smashed ribs, do not call for murderous vengeance: it would seem that the bones are more solid and the nerves less sensitive in England than elsewhere. Blows once exchanged, they take each other by the hand, and dance together on the green grass:

"Then Robin took them both by the hands,
And danc'd round about the oke tree.
'For three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men we be.'"

Moreover, these people, in each parish, practised the bow every Sunday, and were the best archers in the world; from the close of the fourteenth century the general emancipation of the villeins multiplied their number greatly, and you can now understand how, amidst all the operations and changes of the great central powers, the liberty of the subject survived. After all, the only permanent and unalterable guarantee, in every country and under every constitution, is this unspoken declaration in the heart of the mass of the people, which is well understood on all sides: "If any man touches my property, enters my house,

[8] Ritson, verses 94-101.

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obstructs or molests me, let him beware. I have patience, but I have also strong arms, good comrades, a good blade, and, on occasion, a firm resolve, happen what may, to plunge my blade up to its hilt in his throat."

Section VIII.—The English Constitution

Thus thought Sir John Fortescue, Chancellor of England under Henry VI, exiled in France during the Wars of the Roses, one of the oldest prose-writers, and the first who weighed and explained the constitution of his country.[1] He says:

"It is cowardise and lack of hartes and corage that kepeth the Frenchmen from rysyng, and not povertye;[2] which corage no Frenche man hath like to the English man. It hath ben often seen in Englond that iij or iv thefes, for povertie, hath sett upon vij or viij true men, and robbyd them al. But it hath not ben seen in Fraunce, that vij or viij thefes have ben hardy to robbe iij or iv true men. Wherfor it is right seld that Frenchmen be hangyd for robberye, for that they have no hertys to do so terryble an acte. There be therfor mo men hangyd in Englond, in a yere, for robberye and manslaughter, than ther be hangid in Fraunce for such cause of crime in vij yers." [3]

This throws a startling and terrible light on the violent condition of this armed community, where sudden attacks are an every-day matter, and everyone, rich and poor, lives with his hand on his sword. There were great bands of malefactors under Edward I, who infested the country, and fought with those who came to seize them. The inhabitants of the towns were obliged to gather together with those of the neighboring towns, with hue and cry, to pursue and capture them. Under Edward III there were barons who rode about with armed escorts and archers, seizing the manors, carrying off ladies and girls of high degree, mutilating, killing, extorting ransoms from people in their own houses, as if they were in an enemy's land,

[1] "The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy—A learned Commendation of the Politic Laws of England" (Latin). I frequently quote from the second work, which is more full and complete.

[2] The courage which finds utterance here is coarse; the English instincts are combative and independent. The French race, and the Gauls generally, are perhaps the most reckless of life of any.

[3] "The Difference," etc., 3d ed. 1724, ch. xiii. p. 98. There are nowadays in France 42 highway robberies as against 738 in England. In 1843, there were in England four times as many accusations of crimes and offences as in France, having regard to the number of inhabitants (Moreau de Jonnès).

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and sometimes coming before the judges at the sessions in such guise and in so great force that the judges were afraid and dared not administer justice.[4] Read the letters of the Paston family, under Henry VI and Edward IV, and you will see how private war was at every door, how it was necessary for a man to provide himself with men and arms, to be on the alert for defence of his property, to be self-reliant, to depend on his own strength and courage. It is this excess of vigor and readiness to fight which, after their victories in France, set them against one another in England, in the butcheries of the Wars of the Roses. The strangers who saw them were astonished at their bodily strength and courage, at the great pieces of beef "which feed their muscles, at their military habits, their fierce obstinacy, as of savage beasts."[5] They are like their bulldogs, an untamable race, who in their mad courage "cast themselves with shut eyes into the den of a Russian bear, and get their head broken like a rotten apple." This strange condition of a militant community, so full of danger, and requiring so much effort, does not make them afraid. King Edward having given orders to send disturbers of the peace to prison without legal proceedings, and not to liberate them, on bail or otherwise, the Commons declared the order "horribly vexatious"; resist it, refuse to be too much protected. Less peace, but more independence. They maintain the guarantees of the subject at the expense of public security, and prefer turbulent liberty to arbitrary order. Better suffer marauders whom they could fight, than magistrates under whom they would have to bend.

This proud and persistent notion gives rise to, and fashions Fortescue's whole work:

"Ther be two kynds of kyngdomys, of the which that one ys a lordship callid in Latyne Dominium regale, and that other is callid Dominium politicum et regale."

The first is established in France, and the second in England.

"And they dyversen in that the first may rule his people by such lawys as he makyth hymself, and therefor, he may set upon them talys, and other impositions, such as he wyl hymself, without their assent. The secund may not rule hys people by other laws than such as they

[4] Statute of Winchester, 1285; Ordinance of 1378.

[5] Benvenuto Cellini, quoted by Froude, i. 20, "History of England." Shakespeare, "Henry V," conversation of French lords before the battle of Agincourt.

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assenten unto; and therfor he may set upon them non impositions without their own assent." [6]

In a state like this, the will of the people is the prime element of life. Sir John Fortescue says further:

"A king of England cannot at his pleasure make any alterations in the laws of the land, for the nature of his government is not only regal, but political."

"In the body politic, the first thing which lives and moves is the intention of the people, having in it the blood, that is, the prudential care and provision for the public good, which it transmits and communicates to the head, as to the principal part, and to all the rest of the members of the said body politic, whereby it subsists and is invigorated. The law under which the people is incorporated may be compared to the nerves or sinews of the body natural. . . . And as the bones and all the other members of the body preserve their functions and discharge their several offices by the nerves, so do the members of the community by the law. And as the head of the body natural cannot change its nerves or sinews, cannot deny to the several parts their proper energy, their due proportion and aliment of blood, neither can a king who is the head of the body politic change the laws thereof, nor take from the people what is theirs by right, against their consents. . . . For he is appointed to protect his subjects in their lives, properties, and laws, for this very end and purpose he has the delegation of power from the people."

Here we have all the ideas of Locke in the fifteenth century, so powerful is practice to suggest theory! so quickly does man discover, in the enjoyment of liberty, the nature of liberty! Fortescue goes further; he contrasts, step by step, the Roman law, that inheritance of all Latin peoples, with the English law, that heritage of all Teutonic peoples: one the work of absolute princes, and tending altogether to the sacrifice of the individual; the other the work of the common will, tending altogether to protect the person. He contrasts the maxims of the imperial jurisconsults, who accord "force of law to all which is determined by the prince," with the statutes of England, which "are not enacted by the sole will of the prince, . . . but with the concurrent consent of the whole kingdom, by their representatives in Parliament, . . . more than three hundred select persons." He contrasts the arbitrary nomination of imperial officers with the election of the sheriff, and says:

"There is in every county a certain officer, called the king's sheriff, who, amongst other duties of his office, executes within his county all

[6] "The Difference," etc.

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mandates and judgments of the king's courts of justice: he is an annual officer; and it is not lawful for him, after the expiration of his year, to continue to act in his said office, neither shall he be taken in again to execute the said office within two years thence next ensuing. The manner of his election is thus: Every year, on the morrow of All-Souls, there meet in the King's Court of Exchequer all the king's counsellors, as well lords spiritual and temporal, as all other the king's justices, all the barons of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, and certain other officers, when all of them, by common consent, nominate three of every county knights or esquires, persons of distinction, and such as they esteem fittest qualified to bear the office of sheriff of that county for the year ensuing. The king only makes choice of one out of the three so nominated and returned, who, in virtue of the king's letters patent, is constituted High Sheriff of that county."

He contrasts the Roman procedure, which is satisfied with two witnesses to condemn a man, with the jury, the three permitted challenges, the admirable guarantees of justice with which the uprightness, number, repute, and condition of the juries surround the sentence. About the juries he says:

"Twelve good and true men being sworn, as in the manner above related, legally qualified, that is, having, over and besides their movables, possessions in land sufficient, as was said, wherewith to maintain their rank and station; neither inspected by, nor at variance with either of the parties; all of the neighborhood; there shall be read to them, in English, by the Court, the record and nature of the plea." [7]

Thus protected, the English commons cannot be other than flourishing. Consider, on the other hand, he says to the young prince whom he is instructing, the condition of the commons in France. By their taxes, tax on salt, on wine, billeting of soldiers, they are reduced to great misery. You have seen them on your travels. . . .

"The same Commons be so impoverishid and distroyyd, that they may unneth lyve. Thay drink water, thay eate apples, with bred right brown made of rye. They eate no fleshe, but if it be selden, a litill larde, or of the entrails or heds of bests sclayne for the nobles and merchants of the land. They weryn no wollyn, but if it be a pore cote under their uttermost garment, made of grete convass, and cal it a frok. Their hosyn be of like canvas, and passen not their knee, wherfor they be

[7] The original of this very famous treatise, "de Laudibus Legum Angliæ," was written in Latin between 1464 and 1470, first published in 1537, and translated into English in 1775 by Francis Gregor. I have taken these extracts from the magnificent edition of Sir John Fortescue's works published in 1869 for private distribution, and edited by Thomas Fortescue, Lord Clermont. Some of the pieces quoted, left in the old spelling, are taken from an older edition, translated by Robert Mulcaster in 1567.—Tr.

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gartrid and their thyghs bare. Their wifs and children gone bare fote. . . . For sum of them, that was wonte to pay to his lord for his tenement which he hyrith by the year a scute payth now to the kyng, over that scute, fyve skuts. Wher thrugh they be artyd by necessite so to watch, labour and grub in the ground for their sustenance, that their nature is much wasted, and the kynd of them brought to nowght. Thay gone crokyd and ar feeble, not able to fight nor to defend the realm; nor they have wepon, nor monye to buy them wepon withal. . . . This is the frute first of hyre Jus regale. . . . But blessed be God, this land ys rulid under a better lawe, and therfor the people thereof be not in such penurye, nor therby hurt in their persons, but they be wealthie and have all things necessarie to the sustenance of nature. Wherefore they be myghty and able to resyste the adversaries of the realms that do or will do them wrong. Loo, this is the fruit of Jus politicum et regale, under which we lyve." [8] "Everye inhabiter of the realme of England useth and enjoyeth at his pleasure all the fruites that his land or cattel beareth, with al the profits and commodities which by his owne travayle, or by the labour of others, hae gaineth; not hindered by the iniurie or wrong deteinement of anye man, but that hee shall bee allowed a reasonable recompence.[9] . . . Hereby it commeth to passe that the men of that lande are riche, havying aboundaunce of golde and silver, and other thinges necessarie for the maintenaunce of man's life. They drinke no water, unless it be so, that some for devotion, and uppon a zeale of penaunce, doe abstaine from other drinks. They eate plentifully of all kindes of fleshe and fishe. They weare fine woolen cloth in all their apparel; they have also aboundaunce of bedcoveringes in their houses, and of all other woolen stuffe. They have greate store of all hustlementes and implementes of householde, they are plentifully furnished with al instruments of husbandry, and all other things that are requisite to the accomplishment of a quiet and wealthy lyfe, according to their estates and degrees. Neither are they sued in the lawe, but onely before ordinary iudges, where by the lawes of the lande they are iustly intreated. Neither are they arrested or impleaded for their moveables or possessions, or arraigned of any offence, bee it never so great and outragious, but after the lawes of the land, and before the iudges aforesaid." [10]

All this arises from the constitution of the country and the distribution of the land. Whilst in other countries we find only a population of paupers, with here and there a few lords, England is covered and filled with owners of lands and fields; so that "therein so small a thorpe cannot bee founde, wherein dwelleth not a knight, an esquire, or suche a housholder as is there commonly called a franklayne, enryched with greate possessions. And also other freeholders, and many yeomen able

[8] "Of an Absolute and Limited Monarchy," 3d ed. 1724, ch. iii. p. 15.

[9] Commines bears the same testimony.

[10] "De Laudibus," etc., ch. xxxvi.

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for their livelodes to make a jurye in fourme afore-mentioned. For there bee in that lande divers yeomen, which are able to dispend by the yeare above a hundred poundes." [11] Harrison says: [12]

"This sort of people, have more estimation than labourers and the common sort of artificers, and these commonlie live wealthilie, keepe good houses, and travell to get riches. They are for the most part farmers to gentlemen," and keep servants of their own. "These were they that in times past made all France afraid. And albeit they be not called master, as gentlemen are, or sir, as to knights apperteineth, but onelie John and Thomas, etc., yet have they beene found to have done verie good service; and the kings of England, in foughten battels, were wont to remaine among them (who were their footmen) as the French kings did among their horssemen: the prince thereby showing where his chiefe strength did consist."

Such men, says Fortescue, might form a legal jury, and vote, resist, be associated, do everything wherein a free government consists; for they were numerous in every district; they were not down-trodden like the timid peasants of France; they had their honor and that of their family to maintain; "they be well provided with arms; they remember that they have won battles in France." [13] Such is the class, still obscure, but more rich and

[11] "The might of the realme most stondyth upon archers which be not rich men." Compare Hallam, ii. 482. All this takes us back as far as the Conquest, and farther. "It is reasonable to suppose that the greater part of those who appear to have possessed small freeholds or parcels of manors were no other than the original nation. . . . A respectable class of free socagers, having in general full right of alienating their lands, and holding them probably at a small certain rent from the lord of the manor, frequently occurs in the Domesday Book." At all events, there were in Domesday Book Saxons "perfectly exempt from villenage." This class is mentioned with respect in the treatises of Glanvil and Bracton. As for the villeins, they were quickly liberated in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, either by their own energies or by becoming copyholders. The Wars of the Roses still further raised the commons; orders were frequently issued, previous to a battle, to slay the nobles and spare the commoners."

[12] "Description of England," 275.

[13] The following is a portrait of a yeoman, by Latimer, in the first sermon preached before Edward VI, March 8, 1549: "My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of £3 or £4 by year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able, and did find the king a harness, with himself and his horse; while he came to the place that he should receive the king's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went unto Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the King's Majesty now. He married my sisters with £5 or 20 nobles a-piece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God; he kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor; and all this did he of the said farm. Where he that now hath it payeth £16 by the year, or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor."

This is from the sixth sermon, preached before the young king, April 12, 1549: "In my time my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn (me) any other thing; and so, I think, other men did their children. He taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not to draw with strength of arms, as other nations do, but with strength of the body. I had my bows bought me ac-

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powerful every century, which, founded by the down-trodden Saxon aristocracy, and sustained by the surviving Saxon character, ended, under the lead of the inferior Norman nobility and under the patronage of the superior Norman nobility, in establishing and settling a free constitution, and a nation worthy of liberty.

Section IX.—Piers Plowman and Wyclif

When, as here, men are endowed with a serious character, have a resolute spirit, and possess independent habits, they deal with their conscience as with their daily business, and end by laying hands on church as well as state. Already for a long time the exactions of the Roman See had provoked the resistance of the people,[1] and the higher clergy became unpopular. Men complained that the best livings were given by the pope to non-resident strangers; that some Italian, unknown in England, possessed fifty or sixty benefices in England; that English money poured into Rome; and that the clergy, being judged only by clergy, gave themselves up to their vices, and abused their state of immunity. In the first years of Henry III's reign there were nearly a hundred murders committed by priests then alive. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the ecclesiastical revenue was twelve times greater than the civil; about half the soil was in the hands of the clergy. At the end of the century the commons declared that the taxes paid to the church were five times greater than the taxes paid to the crown; and some years afterwards,[2] considering that the wealth of the clergy only served to keep them in idleness and luxury, they proposed to confiscate it for the public benefit. Already the idea of the Reformation had forced itself upon them. They remembered how in the ballads Robin Hood ordered his folk to spare the yeomen, laborers, even knights, if they are good fellows, but never to let abbots or bishops escape. The prelates were grievously oppressing the people by means of their privi-

cording to my age and strength; as I increased in them, so my bows were made bigger and bigger; for men shall never shoot well except they be brought up in it. It is a goodly art, a wholesome kind of exercise, and much commended in physic."

[1] In 1246, 1376. Thierry, iii. 79.

[2] 1404-1409. The commons declared that with these revenues the king would be able to maintain 15 earls, 1500 knights, 6,200 squires, and 100 hospitals; each earl receiving annually 300 marks; each knight 100 marks, and the produce of four ploughed lands; each squire 40 marks, and the produce of two ploughed lands.

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leges, ecclesiastical courts, and tithes; when suddenly, amid the pleasant banter or the monotonous babble of the Norman versifiers, we hear the indignant voice of a Saxon, a man of the people and a victim of oppression, thundering against them.

It is the vision of Piers Plowman, written, it is supposed, by a secular priest of Oxford.[3] Doubtless the traces of French taste are perceptible. It could not be otherwise; the people from below can never quite prevent themselves from imitating the people above, and the most unshackled popular poets, Burns and Béranger, too often preserve an academic style. So here a fashionable machinery, the allegory of the Roman de la Rose, is pressed into service. We have Do-well, Covetousness, Avarice, Simony, Conscience, and a whole world of talking abstractions. But, in spite of these vain foreign phantoms, the body of the poem is national, and true to life. The old language reappears in part; the old metre altogether; no morer rhymes, but barbarous alliterations; no more jesting, but a harsh gravity, a sustained invective, a grand and sombre imagination, heavy Latin texts, hammered down as by a Protestant hand. Piers Plowman went to sleep on the Malvern hills, and there had a wonderful dream:

> "Thanne gan I meten—a merveillous swevene,
> That I was in a wildernesse—wiste I nevere where;
> And as I biheeld into the eest,—an heigh to the sonne,
> I seigh a tour on a toft,—trieliche y-maked,
> A deep dale bynethe—a dongeon thereinne
> With depe diches and derke—and dredfulle of sighte.
> A fair feeld ful of folk—fond I ther bitwene,
> Of alle manere of men,—the meene and the riche,
> Werchynge and wandrynge—as the world asketh.
> Some putten hem to the plough,—pleiden ful selde,
> In settynge and sowynge—swonken ful harde,
> And wonnen that wastours—with glotonye dystruyeth."[4]

A gloomy picture of the world, like the frightful dreams which occur so often in Albert Durer and Luther. The first reformers were persuaded that the earth was given over to evil; that the devil had on it his empire and his officers; that Antichrist, seated on the throne of Rome, displayed ecclesiastical pomps to seduce souls and cast them into the fire of hell. So here Anti-

[3] About 1362.
[4] "Piers Ploughman's Vision and Creed," ed. T. Wright, 1856, i. p. 2, lines 21-44.

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christ, with raised banner, enters a convent; bells are rung; monks in solemn procession go to meet him, and receive with congratulations their lord and father.[5] With seven great giants, the seven deadly sins, he besieges Conscience; and the assault is led by Idleness, who brings with her an army of more than a thousand prelates: for vices reign, more hateful from being in holy places, and employed in the church of God in the devil's service.

"Ac now is Religion a rydere—a romere aboute,
A ledere of love-dayes—and a lond-buggere,
A prikere on a palfrey—fro manere to manere. . . .
And but if his knave knele—that shal his coppe brynge,
He loureth on hym, and asketh hym—who taughte hym curteisie."[6]

But this sacrilegious show has its day, and God puts His hand on men in order to warn them. By order of Conscience, Nature sends forth a host of plagues and diseases from the planets:

"Kynde Conscience tho herde,—and cam out of the planetes,
And sente forth his forreyours—feveres and fluxes,
Coughes and cardiacles,—crampes and tooth-aches,
Reumes and radegundes,—and roynous scabbes,
Biles and bocches,—and brennynge agues,
Frenesies and foule yveles,—forageres of kynde. . . .
There was 'Harrow! and Help!—Here cometh Kynde!
With Deeth that is dredful—to undo us alle!'
The lord that lyved after lust—tho aloud cryde. . . .
Deeth cam dryvynge after,—and al to duste passhed
Kynges and knyghtes,—kaysers and popes, . . .
Manye a lovely lady—and lemmans of knyghtes,
Swowned and swelted for sorwe of hise dyntes."[7]

Here is a crowd of miseries, like those which Milton has described in his vision of human life; tragic pictures and emotions, such as the reformers delight to dwell upon. There is a like speech delivered by John Knox, before the fair ladies of Mary Stuart, which tears the veil from the human corpse just as coarsely, in order to exhibit its shame. The conception of the world, proper to the people of the north, all sad and moral, shows itself already. They are never comfortable in their country; they have to strive continually against cold or rain.

[5] The Archdeacon of Richmond, on his tour in 1216, came to the priory of Bridlington with ninety-seven horses, twenty-one dogs, and three falcons.

[6] "Piers Ploughman's Vision," i. p. 191, lines 6,217-6,228.

[7] Ibid. ii. Last book, p. 430, lines 14,084-14,135.

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They cannot live there carelessly, lying under a lovely sky, in a sultry and clear atmosphere, their eyes filled with the noble beauty and happy serenity of the land. They must work to live; be attentive, exact, keep their houses wind and water tight, trudge doggedly through the mud behind their plough, light their lamps in their shops during the day. Their climate imposes endless inconvenience, and exacts endless endurance. Hence arise melancholy and the idea of duty. Man naturally thinks of life as of a battle, oftener of black death which closes this deadly show, and leads so many plumed and disorderly processions to the silence and the eternity of the grave. All this visible world is vain; there is nothing true but human virtue —the courageous energy with which man attains to self-command, the generous energy with which he employs himself in the service of others. On this view, then, his eyes are fixed; they pierce through worldly gauds, neglect sensual joys, to attain this. By such inner thoughts and feelings the ideal model is displaced; a new source of action springs up—the idea of righteousness. What sets them against ecclesiastical pomp and insolence is neither the envy of the poor and low, nor the anger of the oppressed, nor a revolutionary desire to experimentalize abstract truth, but conscience. They tremble lest they should not work out their salvation if they continue in a corrupt church; they fear the menaces of God, and dare not embark on the great journey with unsafe guides. "What is righteousness?" asked Luther, anxiously, "and how shall I obtain it?" With like anxiety Piers Plowman goes to seek Do-well, and asks each one to show him where he shall find him. "With us," say the friars. "Contra quath ich, *Septies in die cadit justus,* and ho so syngeth certys doth nat wel;" so he betakes himself to "study and writing," like Luther; the clerks at table speak much of God and of the Trinity, "and taken Bernarde to witnesse, and putteth forth presompcions . . . ac the carful mai crie and quaken atte gate, bothe a fyngred and a furst, and for defaute spille ys non so hende to have hym yn. Clerkus and knyghtes carpen of God ofte, and haveth hym muche in hure mouthe, ac mene men in herte;" and heart, inner faith, living virtue, are what constitute true religion. This is what these dull Saxons had begun to discover. The Teutonic conscience, and English good-sense, too, had been aroused, as

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well as individual energy, the resolution to judge and decide alone, by and for one's self. "Christ is our hede that sitteth on hie, Heddis ne ought we have no mo," says a poem, attributed to Chaucer, and which, with others, claims independence for Christian consciences.[8]

> "We ben his membres bothe also,
> Father he taught us call him all,
> Maisters to call forbad he tho;
> Al maisters ben wickid and fals."

No other mediator between man and God. In vain the doctors state that they have authority for their words; there is a word of greater authority, to wit, God's. We hear it in the fourteenth century, this grand "word of God." It quitted the learned schools, the dead languages, the dusty shelves on which the clergy suffered it to sleep, covered with a confusion of commentators and Fathers.[9] Wycliff appeared and translated it like Luther, and in a spirit similar to Luther's. "Cristen men and wymmen, olde and yonge, shulden studie fast in the Newe Testament, for it is of ful autorite, and opyn to undirstonding of simple men, as to the poyntis that be moost nedeful to salvacioun."[10] Religion must be secular, in order to escape from the hands of the clergy, who monopolize it; each must hear and read for himself the word of God; he will then be sure that it has not been corrupted; he will feel it better, and, more, he will understand it better, for

"ech place of holy writ, both opyn and derk, techit mekenes and charite; and therfore he that kepith mekenes and charite hath the trewe undirstondyng and perfectioun of al holi writ. . . . Therfore no simple man of wit be aferd unmesurabli to studie in the text of holy writ . . . and no clerk be proude of the verrey undirstondyng of holy writ, for whi undirstonding of hooly writ with outen charite that kepith Goddis heestis, makith a man depper dampned . . . and pride and covetise of clerkis is cause of her blindees and eresie, and priveth them fro verrey undirstondyng of holy writ."[11]

[8] "Piers Plowman's Crede; the Plowman's Tale," first printed in 1550. There were three editions in one year, it was so manifestly Protestant.

[9] Knighton, about 1400, wrote thus of Wyclif: "Transtulit de Latino in anglicam linguam, non angelicam. Unde per ipeum fit vulgare, et magis apertum laicis et mulieribus legere scientibus quam solet esse clericis admodum litteratis, et bene intelligentibus. Et sic evangelica margerita spargitur et a porcis conculcatur . . . (ita) ut laicis commune æternum quod ante fuerat clericis et ecclesiæ doctoribus talentum supernum."

[10] Wyclif's Bible, ed. Forshall and Madden, 1850, preface to Oxford edition, p. 2.

[11] Ibid.

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These are the memorable words that began to circulate in the markets and in the schools. They read the translated Bible, and commented on it; they judged the existing Church after it. What judgments these serious and untainted minds passed upon it, with what readiness they pushed on to the true religion of their race, we may see from their petition to Parliament.[12] One hundred and thirty years before Luther, they said that the pope was not established by Christ, that pilgrimages and image-worship were akin to idolatry, that external rites are of no importance, that priests ought not to possess temporal wealth, that the docrine of transubstantiation made a people idolatrous, that priests have not the power of absolving from sin. In proof of all this they brought forward texts of Scripture. Fancy these brave spirits, simple and strong souls, who began to read at night in their shops, by candle-light; for they were shopkeepers—tailors, skinners, and bakers—who, with some men of letters, began to read, and then to believe, and finally got themselves burned.[13] What a sight for the fifteenth century, and what a promise! It seems as though, with liberty of action, liberty of mind begins to appear; that these common folk will think and speak; that under the conventional literature, imitated from France, a new literature is dawning; and that England, genuine England, half-mute since the Conquest, will at last find a voice.

She had not yet found it. King and peers ally themselves to the Church, pass terrible statutes, destroy books, burn heretics alive, often with refinement of torture—one in a barrel, another hung by an iron chain around his waist. The temporal wealth of the clergy had been attacked, and therewith the whole English constitution; and the great establishment above crushed out with its whole weight the revolutionists from below. Darkly, in silence, while the nobles were destroying each other in the Wars of the Roses, the commons went on working and living, separating themselves from the established Church, maintaining their liberties, amassing wealth, but not going further.[14] Like a vast rock which underlies the soil, yet crops up here and there at dis-

[12] In 1395.

[13] 1401, William Sawtré, the first Lollard burned alive.

[14] Commines, v. ch. 19 and 20: "In my opinion, of all kingdoms of the world of which I have any knowledge, where the public weal is best observed, and least violence is exercised on the people, and where no buildings are overthrown or demolished in war, England is the best; and the ruin and misfortune falls on them who wage the war. . . . The kingdom of England has this advantage beyond other nations, that the people and the country are not destroyed or burnt, nor the buildings demolished; and ill-fortune falls on men of war, and especially on the nobles."

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tant intervals, they barely show themselves. No great poetical or religious work displays them to the light. They sang; but their ballads, first ignored, then transformed, reach us only in a late edition. They prayed; but beyond one or two indifferent poems, their incomplete and repressed doctrine bore no fruit. We may well see from the verse, tone, and drift of their ballads that they are capable of the finest poetic originality,[15] but their poetry is in the hands of yeomen and harpers. We perceive, by the precocity and energy of their religious protests, that they are capable of the most severe and impassioned creeds; but their faith remains hidden in the shop-parlors of a few obscure sectaries. Neither their faith nor their poetry has been able to attain its end or issue. The Renaissance and the Reformation, those two national outbreaks, are still far off; and the literature of the period retains to the end, like the highest ranks of English society, almost the perfect stamp of its French origin and its foreign models.

[15] See the ballads of "Chevy Chase," "The Nut-Brown Maid," etc. Many of them are admirable little dramas.

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CHAPTER THIRD

THE NEW TONGUE

Section I.—The First Great Poet

AMID so many barren endeavors, throughout the long impotence of Norman literature, which was content to copy, and of Saxon literature, which bore no fruit, a definite language was nevertheless formed, and there was room for a great writer. Geoffrey Chaucer appeared, a man of mark, inventive though a disciple, original though a translator, who by his genius, education, and life, was enabled to know and to depict a whole world, but above all to satisfy the chivalric world and the splendid courts which shone upon the heights.[1] He belonged to it, though learned and versed in all branches of scholastic knowledge; and he took such a share in it that his life from beginning to end was that of a man of the world, and a man of action. We find him by turns in King Edward's army, in the king's train, husband of a maid of honor to the queen, a pensioner, a placeholder, a member of Parliament, a knight, founder of a family which was hereafter to become allied to royalty. Moreover, he was in the king's council, brother-in-law of John of Gaunt, employed more than once in open embassies or secret missions at Florence, Genoa, Milan, Flanders, commissioner in France for the marriage of the Prince of Wales, high up and low down on the political ladder, disgraced, restored to place. This experience of business, travel, war, and the court, was not like a book-education. He was at the Court of Edward III, the most splendid in Europe, amidst tourneys, grand receptions, magnificent displays; he took part in the pomps of France and Milan; conversed with Petrarch, perhaps with Boccaccio and Froissart; was actor in, and spectator of, the finest and most tragical of dramas. In these few words, what cere-

[1] Born between 1328 and 1345, died in 1400.

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monies and cavalcades are implied! what processions in armor, what caparisoned horses, bedizened ladies! what display of gallant and lordly manners! what a varied and brilliant world, well suited to occupy the mind and eyes of a poet! Like Froissart, and better than he, Chaucer could depict the castles of the nobles, their conversations, their talk of love, and anything else that concerned them, and please them by his portraiture.

Section II.—The Decline of the Middle Ages

Two notions raised the Middle Ages above the chaos of barbarism: one religious, which had fashioned the gigantic cathedrals, and swept the masses from their native soil to hurl them upon the Holy Land; the other secular, which had built feudal fortresses, and set the man of courage erect and armed, within his own domain: the one had produced the adventurous hero, the other the mystical monk; the one, to wit, the belief in God, the other the belief in self. Both, running to excess, had degenerated by the violence of their own strength: the one had exalted independence into rebellion, the other had turned piety into enthusiasm: the first made man unfit for civil life, the second drew him back from natural life: the one, sanctioning disorder, dissolved society; the other, enthroning infatuation, perverted intelligence. Chivalry had need to be repressed because it issued in brigandage; devotion restrained because it induced slavery. Turbulent feudalism grew feeble, like oppressive theocracy; and the two great master passions, deprived of their sap and lopped of their stem, gave place by their weakness to the monotony of habit and the taste for worldliness, which shot forth in their stead and flourished under their name.

Gradually, the serious element declined, in books as in manners, in works of art as in books. Architecture, instead of being the handmaid of faith, became the slave of fantasy. It was exaggerated, became too ornamental, sacrificing general effect to detail, shot up its steeples to unreasonable heights, decorated its churches with canopies, pinnacles, trefoiled gables, open-work galleries. "Its whole aim was continually to climb higher, to clothe the sacred edifice with a gaudy bedizenment, as if it were a bride on her wedding morning."[1] Before this marvellous

[1] Renan, "De l'Art au Moyen Age."

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lacework, what emotion could one feel but a pleased astonishment? What becomes of Christian sentiment before such scenic ornamentations? In like manner literature sets itself to play. In the eighteenth century, the second age of absolute monarchy, we saw on one side finials and floriated cupolas, on the other pretty *vers de société*, courtly and sprightly tales, taking the place of severe beauty-lines and noble writings. Even so in the fourteenth century, the second age of feudalism, they had on one side the stone fretwork and slender efflorescence of aërial forms, and on the other finical verses and diverting stories, taking the place of the old grand architecture and the old simple literature. It is no longer the overflowing of a true sentiment which produces them, but the craving for excitement. Consider Chaucer, his subjects, and how he selects them. He goes far and wide to discover them, to Italy, France, to the popular legends, the ancient classics. His readers need diversity, and his business is to "provide fine tales": it was in those days the poet's business.[2] The lords at table have finished dinner, the minstrels come and sing, the brightness of the torches falls on the velvet and ermine, on the fantastic figures, the motley, the elaborate embroidery of their long garments; then the poet arrives, presents his manuscript, "richly illuminated, bound in crimson velvet, embellished with silver clasps and bosses, roses of gold": they ask him what his subject is, and he answers "Love."

Section III.—The Poetry of Chaucer

In fact, it is the most agreeable subject, fittest to make the evening hours pass sweetly, amid the goblets filled with spiced wine and the burning perfumes. Chaucer translated first that great storehouse of gallantry, the "Roman de la Rose." There is no pleasanter entertainment. It is about a rose which the lover wished to pluck: the pictures of the May months, the groves, the flowery earth, the green hedgerows, abound and display their bloom. Then come portraits of the smiling ladies, Richesse, Fraunchise, Gaiety, and by way of contrast, the sad characters, Daunger and Travail, all fully and minutely described, with detail of features, clothing, attitude; they walk

[2] See Froissart, his life with the Count of Foix and with King Richard II.

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about, as on a piece of tapestry, amid landscapes, dances, castles, among allegorical groups, in lively sparkling colors, displayed, contrasted, ever renewed and varied so as to entertain the sight. For an evil has arisen, unknown to serious ages—*ennui;* novelty and brilliancy followed by novelty and brilliancy are necessary to withstand it; and Chaucer, like Boccaccio and Froissart, enters into the struggle with all his heart. He borrows from Boccaccio his history of Palamon and Arcite, from Lollius his history of Troilus and Cressida, and rearranges them. How the two young Theban knights, Arcite and Palamon, both fall in love with the beautiful Emily, and how Arcite, victorious in tourney, falls and dies, bequeathing Emily to his rival; how the fine Trojan knight Troilus wins the favor of Cressida, and how Cressida abandons him for Diomedes—these are still tales in verse, tales of love. A little tedious they may be; all the writings of this age, French, or imitated from French, are born of too prodigal minds; but how they glide along! A winding stream, which flows smoothly on level sand, and sparkles now and again in the sun, is the only image we can compare it to. The characters speak too much, but then they speak so well! Even when they dispute we like to listen, their anger and offences are so wholly based on a happy overflow of unbroken converse. Remember Froissart, how slaughters, assassinations, plagues, the butcheries of the Jacquerie, the whole chaos of human misery, disappears in his fine ceaseless humor, so that the furious and grinning figures seem but ornaments and choice embroideries to relieve the skein of shaded and colored silk which forms the groundwork of his narrative! but, in particular, a multitude of descriptions spread their gilding over all. Chaucer leads you among arms, palaces, temples, and halts before each beautiful thing. Here:

"The statue of Venus glorious for to see
Was naked fleting in the large see,
And fro the navel doun all covered was
With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.
A citole in hire right hand hadde she,
And on hire hed, ful semely for to see,
A rose gerlond fressh, and wel smelling,
Above hire hed hire doves fleckering." [1]

[1] "Knight's Tale," ii. p. 59, lines 1957-1964.

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Further on, the temple of Mars:

"First on the wall was peinted a forest,
In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,
With knotty knarry barrein trees old
Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to behold;
In which ther ran a romble and a swough
As though a storme shuld bresten every bough:
And dounward from an hill under a bent.
Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burned stele, of which th' entree
Was longe and streite, and gastly for to see.
Aud therout came a rage and swiche a vise,
That it made all the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore shone,
For window on the wall ne was ther none,
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
The dore was all of athamant eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With yren tough, and for to make it strong,
Every piler the temple to sustene
Was tonne-gret, of yren bright and shene." [2]

Everywhere on the wall were representations of slaughter; and in the sanctuary

"The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood, . . .
A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete
With eyen red, and of a man he ete." [3]

Are not these contrasts well designed to rouse the imagination? You will meet in Chaucer a succession of similar pictures. Observe the train of combatants who come to joust in the tilting field for Arcite and Palamon:

"With him ther wenten knightes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an habergeon
And in a brestplate, and in a gipon;
And som wol have a pair of plates large;
And som wol have a Pruce sheld, or a targe,
Som wol ben armed on his legges wele,
And have an axe, and som a mace of stele. . . .
Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon
Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace:
Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his hed

[2] "Knight's Tale," ii. p. 59, lines 1977-1996. [3] Ibid., p. 61, lines 2043-2050.

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They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
And like a griffon loked he about,
With kemped heres on his browes stout;
His limmes gret, his braunes hard and stronge,
His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.
And as the guise was in his contree,
Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he,
With foure white bolles in the trais.
Instede of cote-armure on his harnais,
With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.
His longe here was kempt behind his bak,
As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.
A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,
Upon his hed sate ful of stones bright,
Of fine rubins and of diamants.
About his char ther wenten white alauns,
Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,
To hunten at the leon or the dere,
And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound,
Colered with gold, and torettes filed round.
An hundred lordes had he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,
Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,
Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles, white, and round and grete.
His sadel was of brent gold new ybete;
A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging
Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
His crispe here like ringes was yronne,
And that was yelwe, and glitered as the sonne.
His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,
His lippes round, his color was sanguin. . . .
And as a leon he his loking caste.
Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.
His berd was well begonnen for to spring;
His vois was a trompe thondering.
Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
A gerlond fresshe and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bare for his deduit
An egle tame, as any lily whit.
An hundred lordes had he with him there,
All armed save hir hedes in all hir gere,
Ful richely in alle manere things. . . .

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About this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leon and leopart." [4]

A herald would not describe them better nor more fully. The lords and ladies of the time would recognize here their tourneys and masquerades.

There is something more pleasant than a fine narrative, and that is a collection of fine narratives, especially when the narratives are all of different colorings. Froissart gives us such under the name of Chronicles; Boccaccio still better; after him the lords of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles;* and, later still, Marguerite of Navarre. What more natural among people who meet, talk and wish to amuse themselves? The manners of the time suggest them; for the habits and tastes of society had begun, and fiction thus conceived only brings into books the conversations which are heard in the hall and by the wayside. Chaucer describes a troop of pilgrims, people of every rank, who are going to Canterbury; a knight, a sergeant of law, an Oxford clerk, a doctor, a miller, a prioress, a monk, who agree to tell a story all round:

" For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,
To riden by the way domb as the ston."

They tell their stories accordingly; and on this slender and flexible thread all the jewels of feudal imagination, real or false, contribute one after another their motley shapes to form a necklace, side by side with noble and chivalrous stories: we have the miracle of an infant whose throat was cut by Jews, the trials of patient Griselda, Canace and marvellous fictions of Oriental fancy, obscene stories of marriage and monks, allegorical or moral tales, the fable of the cock and hen, a list of great unfortunate persons: Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Nebuchadnezzar, Zenobia, Crœsus, Ugolino, Peter of Spain. I leave out some, for I must be brief. Chaucer is like a jeweller with his hands full: pearls and glass beads, sparkling diamonds and common agates, black jet and ruby roses, all that history and imagination had been able to gather and fashion during three centuries in the East, in France, in Wales, in Provence, in Italy, all that had rolled his way, clashed together, broken or polished by the stream of centuries, and by the great jumble of human memory, he holds in his hand,

[4] " Knight's Tale," ii. p. 63, lines 2120-2188.

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

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arranges it, composes therefrom a long sparkling ornament, with twenty pendants, a thousand facets, which by its splendor, variety, contrasts, may attract and satisfy the eyes of those most greedy for amusement and novelty.

He does more. The universal outburst of unchecked curiosity demands a more refined enjoyment: reverie and fantasy alone can satisfy it; not profound and thoughtful fantasy as we find it in Shakespeare, nor impassioned and meditative reverie as we find it in Dante, but the reverie and fantasy of the eyes, ears, external senses, which in poetry as in architecture call for singularity, wonders, accepted challenges, victories gained over the rational and probable, and which are satisfied only by what is crowded and dazzling. When we look at a cathedral of that time, we feel a sort of fear. Substance is wanting; the walls are hollowed out to make room for windows, the elaborate work of the porches, the wonderful growth of the slender columns, the thin curvature of arches—everything seems to menace us; support has been withdrawn to give way to ornament. Without external prop or buttress, and artificial aid of iron clamp-work, the building would have crumbled to pieces on the first day; as it is, it undoes itself; we have to maintain on the spot a colony of masons continually to ward off the continual decay. But our sight grows dim in following the wavings and twistings of the endless fretwork; the dazzling rose-window of the portal and the painted glass throw a checkered light on the carved stalls of the choir, the gold-work of the altar, the long array of damascened and glittering copes, the crowd of statues, tier above tier; and amid this violet light, this quivering purple, amid these arrows of gold which pierce the gloom, the entire building is like the tail of a mystical peacock. So most of the poems of the time are barren of foundation; at most a trite morality serves them for mainstay: in short, the poet thought of nothing else than displaying before us a glow of colors and a jumble of forms. They are dreams or visions; there are five or six in Chaucer, and you will meet more on your advance to the Renaissance. But the show is splendid. Chaucer is transported in a dream to a temple of glass,[5] on the walls of which are figured in gold all the legends of Ovid and Vergil, an infinite train of characters and dresses, like that which, on the painted glass in the churches, oc-

[5] The House of Fame.

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cupied then the gaze of the faithful. Suddenly a golden eagle, which soars near the sun, and glitters like a carbuncle, descends with the swiftness of lightning, and carries him off in his talons above the stars, dropping him at last before the House of Fame, splendidly built of beryl, with shining windows and lofty turrets, and situated on a high rock of almost inaccessible ice. All the southern side was graven with the names of famous men, but the sun was continuously melting them. On the northern side, the names, better protected, still remained. On the turrets appeared the minstrels and "gestiours," with Orpheus, Arion, and the great harpers, and behind them myriads of musicians, with horns, flutes, bagpipes, and reeds, on which they played, and which filled the air; then all the charmers, magicians, and prophets. He enters, and in a high hall, plated with gold, embossed with pearls, on a throne of carbuncle, he sees a woman seated, a "noble quene," amidst an infinite number of heralds, whose embroidered cloaks bore the arms of the most famous knights in the world, and heard the sounds of instruments, and the celestial melody of Calliope and her sisters. From her throne to the gate was a row of pillars, on which stood the great historians and poets; Josephus on a pillar of lead and iron; Statius on a pillar of iron stained with tiger's blood; Ovid, "Venus's clerk," on a pillar of copper; then, on one higher than the rest, Homer and Livy, Dares the Phrygian, Guido Colonna, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the other historians of the war of Troy. Must I go on copying this phantasmagoria, in which confused erudition mars picturesque invention, and frequent banter shows signs that the vision is only a planned amusement? The poet and his reader have imagined for half-an-hour decorated halls and bustling crowds; a slender thread of common-sense has ingeniously crept along the transparent golden mist which they amuse themselves with following. That suffices; they are pleased with their fleeting fancies, and ask no more.

Amid this exuberancy of mind, amid these refined cravings, and this insatiate exaltation of imagination and the senses, there was one passion, that of love, which, combining all, was developed in excess, and displayed in miniature the sickly charm, the fundamental and fatal exaggeration, which are the characteristics of the age, and which, later, the Spanish civilization exhibits both in its flower and its decay. Long ago, the courts of love

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in Provence had established the theory. "Each one who loves," they said, "grows pale at the sight of her whom he loves; each action of the lover ends in the thought of her whom he loves. Love can refuse nothing to love." [6] This search after excessive sensation had ended in the ecstasies and transports of Guido Cavalcanti, and of Dante; and in Languedoc a company of enthusiasts had established themselves, love-penitents, who, in order to prove the violence of their passion, dressed in summer in furs and heavy garments, and in winter in light gauze, and walked thus about the country, so that several of them fell ill and died. Chaucer, in their wake, explained in his verses the craft of love,[7] the Ten Commandments, the twenty statutes of love; and praised his lady, his "daieseye," his "Margarite," his "vermeil rose"; depicted love in ballads, visions, allegories, didactic poems, in a hundred guises. This is chivalrous, lofty love, as it was conceived in the Middle Ages; above all, tender love. Troilus loves Cressida like a troubadour; without Pandarus, her uncle, he would have languished, and ended by dying in silence. He will not reveal the name of her he loves. Pandarus has to tear it from him, perform all the bold actions himself, plan every kind of stratagem. Troilus, however, brave and strong in battle, can but weep before Cressida, ask her pardon, and faint. Cressida, on her side, has every delicate feeling. When Pandarus brings her Troilus's first letter, she begins by refusing it, and is ashamed to open it: she opens it only because she is told the poor knight is about to die. At the first words "all rosy hewed tho woxe she"; and though the letter is respectful, she will not answer it. She yields at last to the importunites of her uncle, and answers Troilus that she will feel for him the affection of a sister. As to Troilus, he trembles all over, grows pale when he sees the messenger return, doubts his happiness, and will not believe the assurance which is given him:

> "But right so as these holtes and these hayis
> That han in winter dead ben and dry,
> Revesten hem in grene, whan that May is. . . .
> Right in that selfe wise, sooth for to sey,
> Woxe suddainly his herte full of joy." [8]

[6] André le Chapelain, 1170.
[7] Also the "Court of Love," and perhaps "The Assemble of Ladies" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci."
[8] "Troilus and Cressida," vol. v. bk. 3, p. 12.

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Slowly, after many troubles, and thanks to the efforts of Pandarus, he obtains her confession; and in this confession what a delightful charm!

> "And as the newe abashed nightingale,
> That stinteth first, whan she beginneth sing,
> Whan that she heareth any heerdes tale,
> Or in the hedges any wight stearing,
> And after siker doeth her voice outring:
> Right so Creseide, whan that her drede stent,
> Opened her herte and told him her entent." [9]

He, as soon as he perceived a hope from afar,

> "In chaunged voice, right for his very drede,
> Which voice eke quoke, and thereto his manere,
> Goodly abasht, and now his hewes rede,
> Now pale, unto Cresseide his ladie dere,
> With looke doun cast, and humble iyolden chere,
> Lo, the alderfirst word that him astart
> Was twice: 'Mercy, mercy, O my sweet herte!'" [10]

This ardent love breaks out in impassioned accents, in bursts of happiness. Far from being regarded as a fault, it is the source of all virtue. Troilus becomes braver, more generous, more upright, through it; his speech runs now on love and virtue; he scorns all villany; he honors those who possess merit, succors those who are in distress; and Cressida, delighted, repeats all day, with exceeding liveliness, this song, which is like the warbling of a nightingale:

> "Whom should I thanken but you, god of love,
> Of all this blisse, in which to bathe I ginne?
> And thanked be ye, lorde for that I love,
> This is the right life that I am inne,
> To flemen all maner vice and sinne:
> This doeth me so to vertue for to entende
> That daie by daie I in my will amende.
> And who that saieth that for to love is vice, . . .
> He either is envious, or right nice,
> Or is unmightie for his shreudnesse
> To loven. . . .
> But I with all mine herte and all my might,
> As I have saied, woll love unto my last,
> My owne dere herte, and all mine owne knight,

[9] "Troilus and Cressida," vol. v. bk. 3, p. 40. [10] Ibid. p. 4.

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In whiche mine herte growen is so fast,
And his in me, that it shall ever last." [11]

But misfortune comes. Her father Calchas demands her back, and the Trojans decide that they will give her up in exchange for prisoners. At this news she swoons, and Troilus is about to slay himself. Their love at this time seems imperishable; it sports with death, because it constitutes the whole of life. Beyond that better and delicious life which it created, it seems there can be no other:

"But as God would, of swough she abraide,
And gan to sighe, and Troilus she cride,
And he answerde: 'Lady mine, Creseide,
Live ye yet?' and let his swerde doun glide:
'Ye herte mine, that thanked be Cupide,'
(Quod she), and therwithal she sore sight,
And he began to glade her as he might.

"Took her in armes two and kist her oft,
And her to glad, he did al his entent,
For which her gost, that flikered aie a loft,
Into her wofull herte ayen it went:
But at the last, as that her eye glent
Aside, anon she gan his sworde aspie,
As it lay bare, and gan for feare crie.

"And asked him why had he it out draw,
And Troilus anon the cause her told,
And how himself therwith he wold have slain,
For which Creseide upon him gan behold,
And gan him in her armes faste fold,
And said: 'O mercy God, lo which a dede!
Alas, how nigh we weren bothe dede!'" [12]

At last they are separated, with what vows and what tears! and Troilus, alone in his chamber, murmurs:

"'Where is mine owne lady lefe and dere?
Where is her white brest, where is it, where?
Where been her armes, and her eyen clere
That yesterday this time with me were?' . . .
Nor there nas houre in al the day or night,
Whan he was ther as no man might him here,
That he ne sayd: 'O lovesome lady bright,
How have ye faren sins that ye were there?
Welcome ywis mine owne lady dere!' . . .

[11] "Troilus and Cressida," vol. iv. bk. 2, p. 292.

[12] Ibid. vol. v. bk. 4, p. 97.

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Fro thence-forth he rideth up and doune,
And every thing came him to remembraunce,
As he rode forth by the places of the toune,
In which he whilom had all his pleasaunce:
'Lo, yonder saw I mine owne lady daunce,
And in that temple with her eien clere,
Me caught first my right lady dere.
And yonder have I herde full lustely
My dere herte laugh, and yonder play
Saw her ones eke ful blisfully,
And yonder ones to me gan she say,
"Now, good sweete, love me well I pray."
And yonde so goodly gan she me behold,
That to the death mine herte is to her hold,
And at the corner in the yonder house
Herde I mine alderlevest lady dere,
So womanly, with voice melodiouse,
Singen so wel, so goodly, and so clere,
That in my soule yet me thinketh I here
The blissful sowne, and in that yonder place,
My lady first me toke unto her grace.'" [18]

None has since found more true and tender words. These are the charming "poetic branches" which flourished amid gross ignorance and pompous parades. Human intelligence in the Middle Age had blossomed on that side where it perceived the light.

But mere narrative does not suffice to express his felicity and fancy; the poet must go where "shoures sweet of rain descended soft."

"And every plaine was clothed faire
With new greene, and maketh small floures
To springen here and there in field and in mede,
So very good and wholsome be the shoures,
That it renueth that was old and dede,
In winter time; and out of every sede
Springeth the hearbe, so that every wight
Of this season wexeth glad and light. . . .
In which (grove) were okes great, streight as a line,
Under the which the grasse so fresh of hew
Was newly sprong, and an eight foot or nine
Every tree well fro his fellow grew."

He must forget himself in the vague felicity of the country, and, like Dante, lose himself in ideal light and allegory. The dreams

[18] "Troilus and Cressida," vol. v. bk. 5, p. 119 et passim.

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of love, to continue true, must not take too visible a form, nor enter into a too consecutive history; they must float in a misty distance; the soul in which they hover can no longer think of the laws of existence; it inhabits another world; it forgets itself in the ravishing emotion which troubles it, and sees its well-loved visions rise, mingle, come and go, as in summer we see the bees on a hill-slope flutter in a haze of light, and circle round and round the flowers.

"One morning," [14] a lady sings, "at the dawn of day, I entered an oak-grove

> "With branches brode, laden with leves new,
> That sprongen out ayen the sunne-shene,
> Some very red, and some a glad light grene. . . . [15]
>
> "And I, that all this pleasaunt sight sie,
> Thought sodainly I felt so sweet and aire
> Of the eglentere, that certainely
> There is no hert, I deme, in such dispaire,
> Ne with thoughts froward and contraire,
> So overlaid, but it should soone have bote,
> If it had ones felt this savour sote.
>
> "And as I stood, and cast aside mine eie,
> I was ware of the fairest medler tree
> That ever yet in all my life I sie,
> As full of blossomes as it might be;
> Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile
> Fro bough to bough; and, as him list, he eet
> Here and there of buds and floures sweet. . . .
>
> "And as I sat, the birds harkening thus,
> Methought that I heard voices sodainly,
> The most sweetest and most delicious
> That ever any wight, I trow truly,
> Heard in their life, for the armony
> And sweet accord was in so good musike,
> That the voice to angels most was like." [16]

Then she sees arrive "a world of ladies . . . in surcotes white of velvet . . . set with emerauds . . . as of great pearles round and orient, and diamonds fine and rubies red." And all had on their head "a rich fret of gold . . . full of stately riche stones set," with "a chapelet of branches fresh and

[14] "The Flower and the Leaf," vi. p. 244, lines 6-32.
[15] Ibid. p. 245, line 33.
[16] Ibid. vi. p. 246, lines 78-133.

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grene . . . some of laurer, some of woodbind, some of agnus castus"; and at the same time came a train of valiant knights in splendid array, with harness of red gold, shining in the sun, and noble steeds, with trappings "of cloth of gold, and furred with ermine." These knights and ladies were the servants of the Leaf, and they sate under a great oak, at the feet of their queen.

From the other side came a bevy of ladies as resplendent as the first, but crowned with fresh flowers. These were the servants of the Flower. They alighted, and began to dance in the meadow. But heavy clouds appeared in the sky, and a storm broke out. They wished to shelter themselves under the oak, but there was no more room; they ensconced themselves as they could in the hedges and among the brushwood; the rain came down and spoiled their garlands, stained their robes, and washed away their ornaments; when the sun returned, they went to ask succor from the queen of the Leaf; she, being merciful, consoled them, repaired the injury of the rain, and restored their original beauty. Then all disappears as in a dream.

The lady was astonished, when suddenly a fair dame appeared and instructed her. She learned that the servants of the Leaf had lived like brave knights, and those of the Flower had loved idleness and pleasure. She promises to serve the Leaf, and came away.

Is this an allegory? There is at least a lack of wit. There is no ingenious enigma; it is dominated by fancy, and the poet thinks only of displaying in quiet verse the fleeting and brilliant train which had amused his mind, and charmed his eyes.

Chaucer himself, on the first of May, rises and goes out into the meadows. Love enters his heart with the balmy air; the landscape is transfigured, and the birds begin to speak:

"There sate I downe among the faire flours,
And saw the birds trip out of hir bours,
There as they rested them all the night,
They were so joyfull of the dayes light,
They began of May for to done honours.

"They coud that service all by rote,
There was many a lovely note,
Some song loud as they had plained,
And some in other manner voice yfained
And some all out with the ful throte.

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"The proyned hem and made hem right gay,
And daunceden, and lepten on her spray,
And evermore two and two in fere,
Right so as they had chosen hem to yere,
In Feverere upon saint Valentines day.

"And the river that I sate upon,
It made such a noise as it ron,
Accordaunt with the birdes armony,
Methought it was the best melody
That might ben yheard of any mon." [17]

This confused harmony of vague noises troubles the sense; a secret languor enters the soul. The cuckoo throws his monotonous voice like a mournful and tender sigh between the white ash-tree boles; the nightingale makes his triumphant notes roll and ring above the leafy canopy; fancy breaks in unsought, and Chaucer hears them dispute of Love. They sing alternately an antistrophic song, and the nightingale weeps for vexation to hear the cuckoo speak in depreciation of Love. He is consoled, however, by the poet's voice, seeing that he also suffers with him:

"'For love and it hath doe me much wo.'
'Ye use' (quod she) 'this medicine
Every day this May or thou dine
Go looke upon the fresh daisie,
And though thou be for wo in point to die,
That shall full greatly lessen thee of thy pine.

"'And looke alway that thou be good and trew,
And I wol sing one of the songes new,
For love of thee, as loud as I may crie:'
And than she began this song full hie,
'I shrewe all hem that been of love untrue.'" [18]

To such exquisite delicacies love, as with Petrarch, had carried poetry; by refinement even, as with Petrarch, it is lost now and then in its wit, conceits, clinches. But a marked characteristic at once separates it from Petrarch. If over-excited, it is also graceful, polished, full of archness, banter, fine sensual gayety, somewhat gossipy, as the French always paint love. Chaucer follows his true masters, and is himself an elegant speaker, facile, ever ready to smile, loving choice pleasures, a disciple of the

[17] "The Cuckow and Nightingale," vi. p. 121, lines 67-85.

[18] Ibid. p. 126, lines 230-241.

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"Roman de la Rose," and much less Italian than French.[19]. The bent of French character makes of love not a passion, but a gay banquet, tastefully arranged, in which the service is elegant, the food exquisite, the silver brilliant, the two guests in full dress, in good humor, quick to anticipate and please each other, knowing how to keep up the gayety, and when to part. In Chaucer, without doubt, this other altogether worldly vein runs side by side with the sentimental element. If Troilus is a weeping lover, Pandarus is a lively rascal, who volunteers for a singular service with amusing urgency, frank immorality, and carries it out carefully, gratuitously, thoroughly. In these pretty attempts Chaucer accompanies him as far as possible, and is not shocked. On the contrary, he makes fun out of it. At the critical moment, with transparent hypocrisy, he shelters himself behind his "author." If you find the particulars free, he says, it is not my fault; "so writen clerks in hir bokes old," and "I mote, aftir min auctour, telle. . . ." Not only is he gay, but he jests throughout the whole tale. He sees clearly through the tricks of feminine modesty; he laughs at it archly, knowing full well what is behind; he seems to be saying, finger on lip: "Hush! let the grand words roll on, you will be edified presently." We are, in fact, edified; so is he, and in the nick of time he goes away, carrying the light: "For ought I can aspies, this light nor I ne serven here of nought." "Troilus," says uncle Pandarus, "if ye be wise, sweveneth not now, lest more folke arise." Troilus takes care not to swoon; and Cressida at last, being alone with him, speaks wittily and with prudent delicacy; there is here an exceeding charm, no coarseness. Their happiness covers all, even voluptuousness, with a profusion and perfume of its heavenly roses. At most a slight spice of archness flavors it: "and gode thrift he had full oft." Troilus holds his mistress in his arms: "with worse hap God let us never mete." The poet is almost as well pleased as they: for him, as for the men of his time, the sovereign good is love, not damped, but satisfied; they ended even by thinking such love a merit. The ladies declared in their judgments, that when people love, they can refuse nothing to the beloved. Love has become law; it is inscribed in a code; they combine it with religion; and there is a sacrament of love, in which the birds in their anthems sing

[19] Stendhal, "On Love: the difference of Love-taste and Love-passion."

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matins.[20] Chaucer curses with all his heart the covetous wretches, the business men, who treat is as a madness:

> "As would God, tho wretches that despise
> Service of love had eares al so long
> As had Mida, ful of covetise, . . .
> To teachen hem, that they been in the vice
> And lovers not, although they hold hem nice,
> . . . God yeve hem mischaunce,
> And every lover in his trouth avaunce." [21]

He clearly lacks severity, so rare in southern literature. The Italians in the Middle Ages made a virtue of joy; and you perceive that the world of chivalry, as conceived by the French, expanded morality so as to confound it with pleasure.

Section IV.—Characteristics of the Canterbury Tales

There are other characteristics still more gay. The true Gallic literature crops up; obscene tales, practical jokes on one's neighbor, not shrouded in the Ciceronian style of Boccaccio, but related lightly by a man in good humor; [1] above all, active roguery, the trick of laughing at your neighbor's expense. Chaucer displays it better than Rutebeuf, and sometimes better than La Fontaine. He does not knock his men down; he pricks them as he passes, not from deep hatred or indignation, but through sheer nimbleness of disposition, and quick sense of the ridiculous; he throws his gibes at them by handfuls. His man of law is more a man of business than of the world:

> "No wher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
> And yet he semed besier than he was." [2]

His three burgesses:

> "Everich, for the wisdom that he can
> Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.
> For catel hadden they ynough and rent,
> And eke hir wives wolde it wel assent." [3]

[20] "The Court of Love," about 1353, et seq. See also the "Testament of Love."

[21] "Troilus and Cressida," vol. v. iii. pp. 44, 45.

[1] The story of the pear-tree (Merchant's Tale), and of the cradle (Reeve's Tale), for instance, in the "Canterbury Tales."

[2] "Canterbury Tales," prologue, p. 10, line 323.

[3] Ibid. p. 12, line 373.

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Of the mendicant Friar he says:

> "His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,
> Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote." [4]

The mockery here comes from the heart, in the French manner, without effort, calculation, or vehemence. It is so pleasant and so natural to banter one's neighbor! Sometimes the lively vein becomes so copious that it furnishes an entire comedy, indelicate certainly, but so free and life-like! Here is the portrait of the Wife of Bath, who has buried five husbands:

> "Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew,
> She was a worthy woman all hire live;
> Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five,
> Withouten other compagnie in youthe. . . .
> In all the parish wif ne was ther non,
> That to the offring before hire shulde gon,
> And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
> That she was out of alle charitee." [5]

What a tongue she has! Impertinent, full of vanity, bold, chattering, unbridled, she silences everybody, and holds forth for an hour before coming to her tale. We hear her grating, high-pitched, loud, clear voice, wherewith she deafened her husbands. She continually harps upon the same ideas, repeats her reasons, piles them up and confounds them, like a stubborn mule who runs along shaking and ringing his bells, so that the stunned listeners remain open-mouthed, wondering that a single tongue can spin out so many words. The subject was worth the trouble. She proves that she did well to marry five husbands, and she proves it clearly, like a woman who knew it, because she had tried it:

> "God bad us for to wex and multiplie;
> That gentil text can I wel understond;
> Eke wel I wot, he sayd, that min husbond
> Shuld leve fader and moder, and take to me;
> But of no noumbre mention made he,
> Of bigamie or of octogamie;
> Why shuld men than speke of it vilanie?
> Lo here the wise king dan Solomon,
> I trow he hadde wives mo than on,
> (As wolde God it leful were to me
> To be refreshed half so oft as he,)

[4] "Canterbury Tales," prologue, p. 21, line 688.

[5] Ibid. ii. prologue, p. 14, line 460.

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Which a gift of God had he for alle his wives? . . .
Blessed be God that I have wedded five.
Welcome the sixthe whan that ever he shall. . . .
He (Christ) spake to hem that wold live parfitly,
And lordings (by your leve), that am nat I;
I wol bestow the flour of all myn age
In th' actes and the fruit of mariage. . . .
An husbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which shal be both my dettour and my thrall,
And have his tribulation withall
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wif." [6]

Here Chaucer has the freedom of Molière, and we possess it no longer. His good wife justifies marriage in terms just as technical as Sganarelle. It behooves us to turn the pages quickly, and follow in the lump only this Odyssey of marriages. The experienced wife, who has journeyed through life with five husbands, knows the art of taming them, and relates how she persecuted them with jealousy, suspicion, grumbling, quarrels, blows given and received; how the husband, checkmated by the continuity of the tempest, stooped at last, accepted the halter, and turned the domestic mill like a conjugal and resigned ass:

"For as an hors, I coude bite and whine;
I coude plain, and I was in the gilt. . . .
I plained first, so was our werre ystint.
They were ful glad to excusen hem ful blive
Of thing, the which they never agilt hir live. . . .
I swore that all my walking out by night
Was for to espien wenches that he dight. . . .
For though the pope had sitten hem beside,
I wold not spare hem at hir owen bord. . . .
But certainly I made folk swiche chere,
That in his owen grese I made him frie
For anger, and for veray jalousie.
By God, in erth I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie." [7]

She saw the fifth first at the burial of the fourth:

"And Jankin oure clerk was on of tho:
As helpe me God, whan that I saw him go
Aftir the bere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet, so clene and faire,
That all my herte I yave unto his hold.

[6] "Canterbury Tales," ii., Wife of Bath's Prologue, p. 168, lines 5610-5739.

[7] Ibid. p. 179, lines 5968-6072.

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He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was fourty, if I shal say soth. . . .
As helpe me God, I was a lusty on,
And faire, and riche, and yonge, and well begon." [8]

"Yonge," what a word! Was human delusion ever more happily painted? How life-like is all, and how easy the tone. It is the satire of marriage. You will find it twenty times in Chaucer. Nothing more is wanted to exhaust the two subjects of French mockery than to unite with the satire of marriage the satire of religion.

We find it here; and Rabelais is not more bitter. The monk whom Chaucer paints is a hypocrite, a jolly fellow, who knows good inns and jovial hosts better than the poor and the hospitals:

"A Frere there was, a wanton and a mery . . .
Ful wel beloved, and familier was he
With frankeleins over all in his contree,
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun. . . .
Full swetely herde he confession,
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an esy man to give penance,
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance:
For unto a poure ordre for to give
Is signe that a man is wel yshrive. . . .
And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
Better than a lazar and a beggere. . . .
It is not honest, it may not avance,
As for to delen with no swich pouraille,
But all with riche and sellers of vitaille. . . .
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe, although him sore smerte.
Therfore in stede of weping and praieres,
Men mote give silver to the poure freres." [9]

This lively irony had an exponent before in Jean de Meung. But Chaucer pushes it further, and gives it life and motion. His monk begs from house to house, holding out his wallet:

"In every hous he gan to pore and prie,
And begged mele and chese, or elles corn. . . .
'Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese,
Or elles what you list, we may not chese;

[8] "Canterbury Tales," ii., Wife of Bath's Prologue, p. 185, lines 6177-6188.

[9] Ibid. prologue, ii. p. 7, line 208 et passim.

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A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny;
Or yeve us of your braun, if ye have any,
A dagon of your blanket, leve dame,
Our suster dere (lo here I write your name).' . . .
And whan that he was out at dore, anon,
He planed away the names everich on." [10]

He has kept for the end of his circuit, Thomas, one of his most liberal clients. He finds him in bed, and ill; here is excellent fruit to suck and squeeze:

"'God wot,' quod he, 'laboured have I ful sore,
And specially for thy salvation,
Have I sayd many a precious orison. . . .
I have this day ben at your chirche at messe . . .
And ther I saw our dame, a, wher is she?'" [11]

The dame enters:

"This frere ariseth up ful curtisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kisseth hire swete and chirketh as a sparwe." [12] . . .

Then, in his sweetest and most caressing voice, he compliments her, and says:

"'Thanked be God that you yaf soule and lif,
Yet saw I not this day so faire a wif
In all the chirche, God so save me.'" [13]

Have we not here already Tartuffe and Elmire? But the monk is with a farmer, and can go to work more quickly and directly. When the compliments ended, he thinks of the substance, and asks the lady to let him talk alone with Thomas. He must inquire after the state of his soul:

"'I wol with Thomas speke a litel throw:
Thise curates ben so negligent and slow
To gropen tendrely a conscience. . . .
Now, dame,' quod he, 'jeo vous die sanz doute,
Have I nat of a capon but the liver,
And of your white bred nat but a shiver,
And after that a rosted pigges hed

[10] "Canterbury Tales," The Sompnoures Tale, ii. p. 220, lines 7319-7340.
[11] Ibid. p. 221, line 7366.
[12] Ibid. p. 221, line 7384.
[13] Ibid. p. 222, line 7389.

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(But I ne wolde for me no beest were ded),
Than had I with you homly suffisance.
I am a man of litel sustenance,
My spirit hath his fostring in the Bible.
My body is ay so redy and penible
To waken, that my stomak is destroied.' " [14]

Poor man, he raises his hands to heaven, and ends with a sigh.

The wife tells him her child died a fortnight before. Straightway he manufactures a miracle; how could he earn his money in any better way? He had a revelation of this death in the " dortour " of the convent; he saw the child carried to paradise; he rose with his brothers, " with many a tere trilling on our cheke," and they sang a *Te Deum:*

" ' For, sire and dame, trusteth me right wel,
Our orisons ben more effectuel,
And more we seen of Cristes secree thinges
Than borel folk, although that they be kinges.
We live in poverte, and in abstinence,
And borel folk in richesse and dispence. . . .
Lazer and Dives liveden diversely,
And divers guerdon hadden they therby.' " [15]

Presently he spurts out a whole sermon, in a loathsome style, and with an interest which is plain enough. The sick man, wearied, replies that he has already given half his fortune to all kinds of monks, and yet he continually suffers. Listen to the grieved exclamation, the true indignation of the mendicant monk, who sees himself threatened by the competition of a brother of the cloth to share his client, his revenue, his booty, his food-supplies:

" The frere answered: ' O Thomas, dost thou so?
What nedeth you diverse freres to seche?
What nedeth him that hath a parfit leche,
To sechen other leches in the toun?
Your inconstance is your confusion.
Hold ye than me, or elles our covent,
To pray for you ben insufficient?
Thomas, that jape n' is not worth a mite,
Your maladie is for we han to lite.' " [16]

[14] " Canterbury Tales," ii., The Sompnoures Tale, p. 222, lines 7397-7429.
[15] Ibid. p. 223, lines 7450-7460.
[16] Ibid. p. 226, lines 7536-7544.

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Recognize the great orator; he employs even the grand style to keep the supplies from being cut off:

"'A, yeve that covent half a quarter otes;
And yeve that covent four and twenty grotes;
And yeve that frere a peny, and let him go:
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
What is a ferthing worth parted on twelve?
Lo, eche thing that is oned in himself
Is more strong, than whan it is yscatered . . .
Thou woldest han our labour al for nought.'" [17]

Then he begins again his sermon in a louder tone, shouting at each word, quoting examples from Seneca and the classics, a terrible fluency, a trick of his trade, which, diligently applied, must draw money from the patient. He asks for gold, "to make our cloistre,"

". . . 'And yet, God wot, uneth the fundament
Parfourmed is, ne of our pavement
N' is not a tile yet within our wones;
By God, we owen fourty pound for stones.
Now help Thomas, for him that harwed helle,
For elles mote we oure bokes selle,
And if ye lacke oure predication,
Than goth this world all to destruction.
For who so fro this world wold us bereve,
So God me save, Thomas, by your leve,
He wold bereve out of this world the sonne.'" [18]

In the end, Thomas in a rage promises him a gift, tells him to put his hand in the bed and take it, and sends him away duped, mocked, and covered with filth.

We have descended now to popular farce; when amusement must be had at any price, it is sought, as here, in broad jokes, even in filthiness. We can see how these two coarse and vigorous plants have blossomed in the dung of the Middle Ages. Planted by the sly fellows of Champagne and Ile-de-France, watered by the *trouvères*, they were destined fully to expand, speckled and ruddy, in the large hands of Rabelais. Meanwhile Chaucer plucks his nosegay from it. Deceived husbands, mishaps in inns, accidents in bed, cuffs, kicks, and robberies, these suffice to raise a loud laugh. Side by side with noble pictures

[17] "Canterbury Tales," ii., The Sompnoures Tale, p. 226, lines 7545-7553.

[18] Ibid. p. 230, lines 7685-7695.

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of chivalry, he gives us a train of Flemish grotesque figures, carpenters, joiners, friars, summoners; blows abound, fists descend on fleshy backs; many nudities are shown; they swindle one another out of their corn, their wives; they pitch one another out of a window; they brawl and quarrel. A bruise, a piece of open filthiness, passes in such society for a sign of wit. The summoner, being rallied by the friar, gives him tit for tat:

> "'This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,
> And, God it wot, that is but litel wonder,
> Freres and fendes ben but litel asonder.
> For parde, ye han often time herd telle
> How that a Frere ravished was to helle
> In spirit ones by a visoun,
> And as an angel lad him up and doun,
> To shewen him the peines that ther were, . . .
> And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
> (And now hath Sathanas,' saith he, 'a tayl
> Broder than of a Carrike is the sayl.)
> Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas, quod he,
> . . . . . and let the Frere see
> Wher is the nest of Freres in this place.
> And er than half a furlong way of space,
> Right so as bees out swarmen of an hive,
> Out of the devils . . . ther gonnen to drive.
> A twenty thousand Freres on a route,
> And thurghout hell they swarmed all aboute,
> And com agen, as fast as they may gon.'" [19]

Such were the coarse buffooneries of the popular imagination.

Section V.—The Art of Chaucer

It is high time to return to Chaucer himself. Beyond the two notable characteristics which settle his place in his age and school of poetry, there are others which take him out of his age and school. If he was romantic and gay like the rest, it was after a fashion of his own. He observes characters, notes their differences, studies the coherence of their parts, endeavors to describe living individualities—a thing unheard of in his time, but which the renovators in the sixteenth century, and first among them Shakespeare, will do afterwards. Is it already the English positive common-sense and aptitude for seeing the inside of things

[19] "Canterbury Tales," li., The Sompnoures Prologue, p. 217, lines 7254-7279.

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which begins to appear? A new spirit, almost manly, pierces through, in literature as in painting, with Chaucer as with Van Eyck, with both at the same time; no longer the childish imitation of chivalrous life [1] or monastic devotion, but the grave spirit of inquiry and craving for deep truths, whereby art becomes complete. For the first time, in Chaucer as in Van Eyck, the character described stands out in relief; its parts are connected; it is no longer an unsubstantial phantom. You may guess its past and foretell its future action. Its externals manifest the personal and incommunicable details of its inner nature, and the infinite complexity of its economy and motion. To this day, after four centuries, that character is individualized and typical; it remains distinct in our memory, like the creations of Shakespeare and Rubens. We observe this growth in the very act. Not only does Chaucer, like Boccaccio, bind his tales into a single history; but in addition—and this is wanting in Boccaccio—he begins with the portrait of all his narrators, knight, summoner, man of law, monk, bailiff or reeve, host, about thirty distinct figures, of every sex, conditon, age, each painted with his disposition, face, costume, turns of speech, little significant actions, habits, antecedents, each maintained in his character by his talk and subsequent actions, so that we can discern here, sooner than in any other nation, the germ of the domestic novel as we write it to-day. Think of the portraits of the franklin, the miller, the mendicant friar, and wife of Bath. There are plenty of others which show the broad brutalities, the coarse tricks, and the pleasantries of vulgar life, as well as the gross and plentiful feastings of sensual life. Here and there honest old swashbucklers, who double their fists, and tuck up their sleeves; or contented beadles, who, when they have drunk, will speak nothing but Latin. But by the side of these there are some choice characters; the knight, who went on a crusade to Granada and Prussia, brave and courteous:

> "And though that he was worthy he was wise,
> And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
> He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
> In alle his lif, unto no manere wight,
> He was a veray parfit gentil knight." [2]

[1] See in "The Canterbury Tales" the Rhyme of Sir Topas, a parody on the chivalric histories. Each character there seems a precursor of Cervantes.

[2] Prologue to "Canterbury Tales," ii. p. 3, lines 68-72.

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"With him, ther was his sone, a yonge Squier,
A lover, and a lusty bacheler,
With lockes crull as they were laide in presse.
Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.
And he hadde be somtime in chevachie,
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Alle ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
He was as fresshe, as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with sleves long and wide.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.
He coude songes make, and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
So hote he loved, that by nightertale
He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
Curteis he was, lowly and servisable,
And carf befor his fader at the table." [3]

There is also a poor and learned clerk of Oxford; and finer still, and more worthy of a modern hand, the Prioress, "Madame Eglantine," who as a nun, a maiden, a great lady, is ceremonious, and shows signs of exquisite taste. Would a better be found nowadays in a German chapter, amid the most modest and lively bevy of sentimental and literary canonesses?

"Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy
Hire gretest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy;
And she was cleped Madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the service devine,
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly
After the scole of Stratford-atte-bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle;
So lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
No wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.
In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.
Hire over lippe wiped she so clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene

[3] Prologue to "Canterbury Tales," ii. p. 3, lines 79-100.

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Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught,
Ful semely after hire mete she raught.
And sikerly she was of grete disport
And ful plesant, and amiable of port,
And peined hire to contrefeten chere
Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence." [4]

Are you offended by these provincial affectations? Not at all; it is delightful to behold these nice and pretty ways, these little affectations, the waggery and prudery, the half-worldly, half-monastic smile. We inhale a delicate feminine perfume, preserved and grown old under the stomacher:

" But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede.
But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert:
And all was conscience and tendre herte." [5]

Many elderly ladies throw themselves into such affections as these for lack of others. Elderly! what an objectionable word have I employed! She was not elderly:

" Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was,
Hire nose tretis; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red;
But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe;
For hardily she was not undergrowe.
Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of small corall aboute hire arm she bare
A pair of bedes, gauded al with grene;
And thereon heng a broche of gold ful shene,
On whiche was first ywritten a crouned A,
And after, Amor vincit omnia." [6]

A pretty ambiguous device, suitable either for gallantry or devotion; the lady was both of the world and the cloister: of the world, you may see it in her dress; of the cloister, you gather it from " another Nonne also with hire hadde she, that was hire

[4] Prologue to " Canterbury Tales," ii. p. 4, lines 118-141.
[5] Ibid. p. 5, lines 142-150.
[6] Ibid. p. 5, lines 151-162.

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chapelleine, and Preestes thre"; from the Ave Maria which she sings, the long edifying stories which she relates. She is like a fresh, sweet, and ruddy cherry, made to ripen in the sun, but which, preserved in an ecclesiastical jar, has become candied and insipid in the syrup.

Such is the power of reflection which begins to dawn, such the high art. Chaucer studies here, rather than aims at amusement; he ceases to gossip, and thinks; instead of surrendering himself to the facility of flowing improvisation, he plans. Each tale is suited to the teller: the young squire relates a fantastic and Oriental history; the tipsy miller a loose and comical story; the honest clerk the touching legend of Griselda. All these tales are bound together, and that much better than by Boccaccio, by little veritable incidents, which spring from the characters of the personages, and such as we light upon in our travels. The horsemen ride on in good humor in the sunshine, in the open country; they converse. The miller has drunk too much ale, and will speak, "and for no man forbere." The cook goes to sleep on his beast, and they play practical jokes on him. The monk and the summoner get up a dispute about their respective lines of business. The host restores peace, makes them speak or be silent, like a man who has long presided in the inn parlor, and who has often had to check brawlers. They pass judgment on the stories they listen to: declaring that there are few Griseldas in the world; laughing at the misadventures of the tricked carpenter; drawing a lesson from the moral tale. The poem is no longer, as in the contemporary literature, a mere procession, but a painting in which the contrasts are arranged, the attitudes chosen, the general effect calculated, so that it becomes life and motion; we forget ourselves at the sight, as in the case of every lifelike work; and we long to get on horseback on a fine sunny morning, and canter along green meadows with the pilgrims to the shrine of the good saint of Canterbury.

Weigh the value of the words "general effect." According as we plan it or not, we enter on our maturity or infancy! The whole future lies in these two words. Savages or half savages, warriors of the Heptarchy or knights of the Middle Ages; up to this period, no one had reached to this point. They had strong emotions, tender at times, and each expressed them according to the original gift of his race, some by short cries, others by contin-

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uous babble. But they did not command or guide their impressions; they sang or conversed by impulse, at random, according to the bent of their disposition, leaving their ideas to present themselves as they might, and when they hit upon order, it was ignorantly and involuntarily. Here for the first time appears a superiority of intellect, which at the instant of conception suddenly halts, rises above itself, passes judgment, and says to itself, "This phrase tells the same thing as the last—remove it; these two ideas are disjointed—connect them; this description is feeble—reconsider it." When a man can speak thus he has an idea, not learned in the schools, but personal and practical, of the human mind, its process and needs, and of things also, their composition and combinations; he has a style, that is, he is capable of making everything understood and seen by the human mind. He can extract from every object, landscape, situation, character, the special and significant marks, so as to group and arrange them, in order to compose an artificial work which surpasses the natural work in its purity and completeness. He is capable, as Chaucer was, of seeking out in the old common forest of the Middle Ages, stories and legends, to replant them in his own soil, and make them send out new shoots. He has the right and the power, as Chaucer had, of copying and translating, because by dint of retouching he impresses on his translations and copies his original mark; he re-creates what he imitates, because through or by the side of worn-out fancies and monotonous stories, he can display, as Chaucer did, the charming ideas of an amiable and elastic mind, the thirty master-forms of the fourteenth century, the splendid freshness of the verdurous landscape and spring-time of England. He is not far from conceiving an idea of truth and life. He is on the brink of independent thought and fertile discovery. This was Chaucer's position. At the distance of a century and a half, he has affinity with the poets of Elizabeth [1] by his gallery of pictures, and with the reformers of the sixteenth century by his portrait of the good parson.

Affinity merely. He advanced a few steps beyond the threshold of his art, but he paused at the end of the vestibule. He half

[1] Tennyson, in his "Dream of Fair Women," sings:

"Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still."—Tr.

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opens the great door of the temple, but does not take his seat there; at most, he sat down in it only at intervals. In "Arcite and Palamon," in "Troilus and Cressida," he sketches sentiments, but does not create characters; he easily and naturally traces the winding course of events and conversations, but does not mark the precise outline of a striking figure. If occasionally, as in the description of the temple of Mars, after the "Thebaid" of Statius, feeling at his back the glowing breeze of poetry, he draws out his feet, clogged with the mud of the Middle Ages, and at a bound stands upon the poetic plain on which Statius imitated Vergil and equalled Lucan, he, at other times, again falls back into the childish gossip of the *trouvères*, or the dull gabble of learned clerks—to "Dan Phebus or Apollo-Delphicus." Elsewhere, a commonplace remark on art intrudes in the midst of an impassioned description. He uses three thousand verses to conduct Troilus to his first interview. He is like a precocious and poetical child, who mingles in his love-dreams quotations from his grammar and recollections of his alphabet.[8] Even in the "Canterbury Tales" he repeats himself, unfolds artless developments, forgets to concentrate his passion or his idea. He begins a jest, and scarcely ends it. He dilutes a bright coloring in a monotonous stanza. His voice is like that of a boy breaking into manhood. At first a manly and firm accent is maintained, then a shrill sweet sound shows that his growth is not finished, and that his strength is subject to weakness. Chaucer sets out as if to quit the Middle Ages; but in the end he is there still. To-day he composes the "Canterbury Tales"; yesterday he was translating the "Roman de la Rose." To-day he is studying the complicated machinery of the heart, discovering the issues of primitive education or of the ruling disposition, and creating the comedy of manners; to-morrow he will have no pleasure but in curious events, smooth allegories, amorous discussions, imitated from the French, or learned moralities from the ancients. Alternately he is an observer and a *trouvère;* instead of the step he ought to have advanced, he has but made a half-step.

[8] Speaking of Cressida, iv. book i. p. 236, he says:

"Right as our first letter is now an a,
In beautie first so stood she makeles,
Her goodly looking gladed all the prees,
Nas never seene thing to be praised so derre,
Nor under cloude blacke so bright a sterre."

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Who has prevented him, and the others who surround him? We meet with the obstacle in the tales he has translated of Melibeus, of the Parson, in his "Testament of Love"; in short, so long as he writes verse, he is at his ease; as soon as he takes to prose, a sort of chain winds around his feet and stops him. His imagination is free, and his reasoning a slave. The rigid scholastic divisions, the mechanical manner of arguing and replying, the ergo, the Latin quotations, the authority of Aristotle and the Fathers, come and weigh down his budding thought. His native invention disappears under the discipline imposed. The servitude is so heavy that even in the work of one of his contemporaries, the "Testament of Love," which, for a long time, was believed to be written by Chaucer, amid the most touching plaints and the most smarting pains, the beautiful ideal lady, the heavenly mediator who appears in a vision, Love, sets her theses, establishes that the cause of a cause is the cause of the thing caused, and reasons as pedantically as they would at Oxford. In what can talent, even feeling, end, when it is kept down by such shackles? What succession of original truths and new doctrines could be found and proved, when in a moral tale, like that of Melibeus and his wife Prudence, it was thought necessary to establish a formal controversy, to quote Seneca and Job, to forbid tears, to bring forward the weeping Christ to authorize tears, to enumerate every proof, to call in Solomon, Cassiodorus, and Cato; in short, to write a book for schools? The public cares only for pleasant and lively thoughts; not serious and general ideas; these latter are for a special class only. As soon as Chaucer gets into a reflective mood, straightway Saint Thomas, Peter Lombard, the manual of sins, the treatise on definition and syllogism, the army of the ancients and of the Fathers, descend from their glory, enter his brain, speak in his stead; and the *trouvère's* pleasant voice becomes the dogmatic and sleep-inspiring voice of a doctor. In love and satire he has experience, and he invents; in what regards morality and philosophy he has learning, and copies. For an instant, by a solitary leap, he entered upon the close observation, and the genuine study of man; he could not keep his ground, he did not take his seat, he took a poetic excursion; and no one followed him. The level of the century is lower; he is on it himself for the most part. He is in the company of narrators like Froissart, of elegant speakers like

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Charles of Orléans, of gossipy and barren verse-writers like Gower, Lydgate, and Occleve. There is no fruit, but frail and fleeting blossoms, many useless branches, still more dying or dead branches; such is this literature. And why? Because it had no longer a root; after three centuries of effort, a heavy instrument cut it underground. This instrument was the Scholastic Philosophy.

Section VI.—Scholastic Philosophy

Beneath every literature there is a philosophy. Beneath every work of art is an idea of nature and of life; this idea leads the poet. Whether the author knows it or not, he writes in order to exhibit it; and the characters which he fashions, like the events which he arranges, only serve to bring to light the dim creative conception which raises and combines them. Underlying Homer appears the noble life of heroic paganism and of happy Greece. Underlying Dante, the sad and violent life of fanatical Catholicism and of the much-hating Italians. From either we might draw a theory of man and of the beautiful. It is so with others; and this is how, according to the variations, the birth, blossoms, decline, or sluggishness of the master-idea, literature varies, is born, flourishes, degenerates, comes to an end. Whoever plants the one, plants the other: whoever undermines the one, undermines the other. Place in all the minds of any age a new grand idea of nature and life, so that they feel and produce it with their whole heart and strength, and you will see them, seized with the craving to express it, invent forms of art and groups of figures. Take away from these minds every grand new idea of nature and life, and you will see them, deprived of the craving to express all-important thoughts, copy, sink into silence, or rave.

What has become of all these all-important thoughts? What labor worked them out? What studies nourished them? The laborers did not lack zeal. In the twelfth century the energy of their minds was admirable. At Oxford there were thirty thousand scholars. No building in Paris could contain the crowd of Abelard's disciples; when he retired to solitude, they accompanied him in such a multitude that the desert became a town. No difficulty repulsed them. There is a story of a young boy, who,

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though beaten by his master, was wholly bent on remaining with him, that he might still learn. When the terrible encyclopædia of Aristotle was introduced, though disfigured and unintelligible it was devoured. The only question presented to them, that of universals, so abstract and dry, so embarrassed by Arabic obscurities and Greek subtilties, during centuries, was seized upon eagerly. Heavy and awkward as was the instrument supplied to them, I mean syllogism, they made themselves masters of it, rendered it still more heavy, plunged it into every object and in every direction. They constructed monstrous books, in great numbers, cathedrals of syllogism, of unheard-of architecture, of prodigious finish, heightened in effect by intensity of intellectual power, which the whole sum of human labor has only twice been able to match.[1] These young and valiant minds thought they had found the temple of truth; they rushed at it headlong, in legions, breaking in the doors, clambering over the walls, leaping into the interior, and so found themselves at the bottom of a moat. Three centuries of labor at the bottom of this black moat added not one idea to the human mind.

For consider the questions which they treat of. They seem to be marching, but are merely marking time. People would say, to see them moil and toil, that they will educe from heart and brain some great original creed, and yet all belief was imposed upon them from the outset. The system was made; they could only arrange and comment upon it. The conception comes not from them, but from Constantinople. Infinitely complicated and subtle as it is, the supreme work of Oriental mysticism and Greek metaphysics, so disproportoned to their young understanding, they exhaust themselves to reproduce it, and moreover burden their unpractised hands with the weight of a logical instrument which Aristotle created for theory and not for practice, and which ought to have remained in a cabinet of philosophical curiosities, without being ever carried into the field of action. "Whether the divine essence engendered the Son, or was engendered by the Father; why the three persons together are not greater than one alone; attributes determine persons, not sub-

[1] Under Proclus and under Hegel. Duns Scotus, at the age of thirty-one, died, leaving beside his sermons and commentaries, twelve folio volumes, in a small close handwriting, in a style like Hegel's, on the same subject as Proclus treats of. Similarly with Saint Thomas and the whole train of schoolmen. No idea can be formed of such a labor before handling the books themselves.

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stance, that is, nature; how properties can exist in the nature of God, and not determine it; if created spirits are local and can be circumscribed; if God can know more things than He is aware of";[2]—these are the ideas which they moot: what truth could issue thence? From hand to hand the chimera grows, and spreads wider its gloomy wings. "Can God cause that, the place and body being retained, the body shall have no position, that is, existence in place?—Whether the impossibility of being engendered is a constituent property of the First Person of the Trinity—Whether identity, similitude, and equality are real relations in God."[3] Duns Scotus distinguishes three kinds of matter: matter which is firstly first, secondly first, thirdly first. According to him, we must clear this triple hedge of thorny abstractions in order to understand the production of a sphere of brass. Under such a regimen, imbecility soon makes its appearance. Saint Thomas himself considers, "whether the body of Christ arose with its wounds—whether this body moves with the motion of the host and the chalice in consecration—whether at the first instant of conception Christ had the use of free judgment—whether Christ was slain by himself or by another?" Do you think you are at the limits of human folly? Listen. He considers "whether the dove in which the Holy Spirit appeared was a real animal—whether a glorified body can occupy one and the same place at the same time as another glorified body—whether in the state of innocence all children were masculine?" I pass over others as to the digestion of Christ, and some still more untranslatable.[4] This is the point reached by the most esteemed doctor, the most judicious mind, the Bossuet of the Middle Ages. Even in this ring of inanities the answers are laid down. Roscellinus and Abelard were excommunicated, exiled, imprisoned, because they swerved from it. There is a complete minute dogma which closes all issues; there is no means of escaping; after a hundred wriggles and a hundred efforts you must come and tumble into a formula. If by mysticism you try to fly over their heads, if by experience you endeavor to creep

[2] Peter Lombard, "Book of Sentences." It was the classic of the Middle Ages.

[3] Duns Scotus, ed. 1639.

[4] Utrum angelus diligat se ipsum dilectione naturali vel electiva? Utrum in statu innocentiæ fuerit generatio per coitum? Utrum omnes fuissent nati in sexu masculino? Utrum cognitio angeli posset dici matutina et vespertina? Utrum martyribus aureola debeatur? Utrum virgo Maria fuerit virgo in concipiendo? Utrum remanserit virgo post partum? The reader may look out in the text the reply to these last two questions. (S. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," ed. 1677.)

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beneath, powerful talons await you at your exit. The wise man passes for a magician, the enlightened man for a heretic. The Waldenses, the Catharists, the disciples of John of Parma, were burned; Roger Bacon died only just in time, otherwise he might have been burned. Under this constraint men ceased to think; for he who speaks of thought, speaks of an effort at invention, an individual creation, an energetic action. They recite a lesson, or sing a catechism; even in paradise, even in ecstasy and the divinest raptures of love, Dante thinks himself bound to show an exact memory and a scholastic orthodoxy. How then with the rest? Some, like Raymond Lully, set about inventing an instrument of reasoning to serve in place of the understanding. About the fourteenth century, under the blows of Occam, this verbal science began to totter; they saw that its entities were only words; it was discredited. In 1367, at Oxford, of thirty thousand students, there remained six thousand;[5] they still set their "Barbara and Felapton," but only in the way of routine. Each one in turn mechanically traversed the petty region of threadbare cavils, scratched himself in the briers of quibbles, and burdened himself with his bundle of texts; nothing more. The vast body of science which was to have formed and vivified the whole thought of man, was reduced to a text-book.

So, little by little, the conception which fertilized and ruled all others, dried up; the deep spring, whence flowed all poetic streams, was found empty; science furnished nothing more to the world. What further works could the world produce? As Spain, later on, renewing the Middle Ages, after having shone splendidly and foolishly by her chivalry and devotion, by Lope de Vega and Calderon, Loyola and St. Theresa, became enervated through the Inquisition and through casuistry, and ended by sinking into a brutish silence; so the Middle Ages, outstripping Spain, after displaying the senseless heroism of the Crusades, and the poetical ecstasy of the cloister, after producing chivalry and saintship, Francis of Assisi, St. Louis, and Dante, languished under the Inquisition and the scholastic learning, and became extinguished in idle raving and inanity.

[5] The Rev. Henry Anstey, in his Introduction to "Munimenta Academica," Lond. 1868, says that "the statement of Richard of Armagh that there were in the thirteenth century 30,000 scholars at Oxford is almost incredible." P. xlviii.—Tr.

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Must we quote all these good people who speak without having anything to say? You may find them in Warton;[6] dozens of translators, importing the poverties of French literature, and imitating imitations; rhyming chroniclers, most commonplace of men, whom we only read because we must accept history from every quarter, even from imbeciles; spinners and spinsters of didactic poems, who pile up verses on the training of falcons, on heraldry, on chemistry; editors of moralities, who invent the same dream over again for the hundredth time, and get themselves taught universal history by the goddess Sapience. Like the writers of the Latin decadence, these folk only think of copying, compiling, abridging, constructing in text-books, in rhymed memoranda, the encyclopædia of their times.

Listen to the most illustrious, the grave Gower—"morall Gower," as he was called![7] Doubtless here and there he contains a remnant of brilliancy and grace. He is like an old secretary of a Court of Love, André le Chapelain or any other, who would pass the day in solemnly registering the sentences of ladies, and in the evening, partly asleep on his desk, would see in a half-dream their sweet smile and their beautiful eyes.[8] The ingenious but exhausted vein of Charles of Orléans still flows in his French ballads. He has the same fondling delicacy, almost a little affected. The poor little poetic spring flows yet in thin, transparent streamlets over the smooth pebbles, and murmurs with a babble, pretty, but so low that at times you cannot hear it. But dull is the rest! His great poem, "Confessio Amantis," is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, imitated chiefly from Jean de Meung, having for object, like the "Roman de la Rose," to explain and classify the impediments of love. The superannuated theme is always reappearing, covered by a crude erudition. You will find here an exposition of hermetic science, lectures on the philosophy of Aristotle, a treatise on politics, a litany of ancient and modern legends gleaned from the compilers, marred in the passage by the pedantry of the schools and the ignorance of the age. It is a cartload of scholastic rubbish; the sewer tumbles upon this feeble spirit, which of itself was flowing clearly, but now, obstructed by tiles, bricks, plaster, ruins from all quarters of the globe, drags on

[6] "History of English Poetry," vol. ii. [7] Contemporary with Chaucer. The "Confessio Amantis" dates from 1393. [8] "History of Rosiphele." "Ballads."

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darkened and sluggish. Gower, one of the most learned of his time,[9] supposed that Latin was invented by the old prophetess Carmentis; that the grammarians, Aristarchus, Donatus, and Didymus, regulated its syntax, pronunciation, and prosody; that it was adorned by Cicero with the flowers of eloquence and rhetoric; then enriched by translations from the Arabic, Chaldæan, and Greek; and that at last, after much labor of celebrated writers, it attained its final perfection in Ovid, the poet of love. Elsewhere he discovered that Ulysses learned rhetoric from Cicero, magic from Zoroaster, astronomy from Ptolemy, and philosophy from Plato. And what a style! so long, so dull,[10] so drawn out by repetitions, the most minute details, garnished with references to his text, like a man who, with his eyes glued to his Aristotle and his Ovid, a slave of his musty parchments, can do nothing but copy and string his rhymes together. Schoolboys even in old age, they seem to believe that every truth, all wit, is their great wood-bound books; that they have no need to find out and invent for themselves; that their whole business is to repeat; that this is, in fact, man's business. The scholastic system had enthroned the dead letter, and peopled the world with dead understandings.

After Gower come Occleve and Lydgate.[11] "My father Chaucer would willingly have taught me," says Occleve, "but I was dull, and learned little or nothing." He paraphrased in verse a treatise of Egidius, on government; these are moralities. There are others, on compassion, after Augustine, and on the art of dying; then love-tales; a letter from Cupid, dated from his court in the month of May. Love and moralities,[12] that is, abstractions and affectuation, were the taste of the time; and so, in the time of Lebrun, of Esménard, at the close of contemporaneous French literature,[13] they produced collections of didactic poems, and odes to Chloris. As for the monk Lydgate, he had some talent, some imagination, especially in high-toned descriptions: it was the last flicker of a dying literature; gold received a golden coating, precious stones were placed upon diamonds, ornaments multiplied and made fantastic; as in their dress and

[9] Warton, ii. 240.
[10] See, for instance his description of the sun's crown, the most poetical passage in book vii.
[11] 1420, 1430.
[12] This is the title Froissart (1397) gave to his collection when presenting it to Richard II.
[13] Lebrun, 1729-1807; Esménard, 1770-1812.

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buildings, so in their style.[14] Look at the costumes of Henry IV and Henry V, monstrous heart-shaped or horn-shaped head-dresses, long sleeves covered with ridiculous designs, the plumes, and again the oratories, armorial tombs, little gaudy chapels, like conspicuous flowers under the naves of the Gothic perpendicular. When we can no more speak to the soul, we try to speak to the eyes. This is what Lydgate does, nothing more. Pageants or shows are required of him, "disguisings" for the company of goldsmiths; a mask before the king, a May entertainment for the sheriffs of London, a drama of the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, a masquerade, a Christmas show; he gives the plan and furnishes the verses. In this matter he never runs dry; two hundred and fifty-one poems are attributed to him. Poetry thus conceived becomes a manufacture; it is composed by the yard. Such was the judgment of the Abbot of St. Albans, who, having got him to translate a legend in verse, pays a hundred shillings for the whole, verse, writing, and illuminations, placing the three works on a level. In fact, no more thought was required for the one than for the others. His three great works, "The Fall of Princes," "The Destruction of Troy," and "The Siege of Thebes," are only translations or paraphrases, verbose, erudite, descriptive, a kind of chivalrous processions, colored for the twentieth time, in the same manner, on the same vellum. The only point which rises above the average, at least in the first poem, is the idea of Fortune,[15] and the violent vicissitudes of human life. If there was a philosophy at this time, this was it. They willingly narrated horrible and tragic histories; gather them from antiquity down to their own day; they were far from the trusting and passionate piety which felt the hand of God in the government of the world; they saw that the world went blundering here and there like a drunken man. A sad and gloomy world, amused by eternal pleasures, oppressed with a dull misery, which suffered and feared without consolation or hope, isolated between the ancient spirit in which it had no living hope, and the modern spirit whose active science it ignored. Fortune, like a black smoke, hovers over all, and shuts out the sight of heaven. They picture it as follows:

[14] Lydgate, "The Destruction of Troy"—description of Hector's chapel. Especially read the Pageants or Solemn Entries.

[15] See the Vision of Fortune, a gigantic figure. In this painting he shows both feeling and talent.

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"Her face semyng cruel and terrible
And by disdaynè menacing of loke, . . .
An hundred handes she had, of eche part . . .
Some of her handès lyft up men alofte,
To hye estate of worldlye dignitè;
Another handè griped ful unsofte,
Which cast another in grete adversite." [16]

They look upon the great unhappy ones, a captive king, a dethroned queen, assassinated princes, noble cities destroyed,[17] lamentable spectacles as exhibited in Germany and France, and of which there will be plenty in England; and they can only regard them with a harsh resignation. Lydgate ends by reciting a commonplace of mechanical piety, by way of consolation. The reader makes the sign of the cross, yawns, and goes away. In fact, poetry and religion are no longer capable of suggesting a genuine sentiment. Authors copy, and copy again. Hawes [18] copies the "House of Fame" of Chaucer, and a sort of allegorical amorous poem, after the "Roman de la Rose." Barclay [19] translates the "Mirror of Good Manners" and the "Ship of Fools." Continually we meet with dull abstractions, used up and barren; it is the scholastic phase of poetry. If anywhere there is an accent of greater originality, it is in this "Ship of Fools," and in Lydgate's "Dance of Death," bitter buffooneries, sad gayeties, which, in the hands of artists and poets, were having their run throughout Europe. They mock at each other, grotesquely and gloomily; poor, dull, and vulgar figures, shut up in a ship, or made to dance on their tomb to the sound of a fiddle, played by a grinning skeleton. At the end of all this mouldy talk, and amid the disgust which they have conceived for each other, a clown, a tavern Triboulet,[20] composer of little jeering and macaronic verses, Skelton [21] makes his appearance, a virulent pamphleteer, who, jumbling together French, English, Latin phrases, with slang, and fashionable words, invented words, intermingled with short rhymes, fabricates a sort of literary mud, with which he bespatters Wolsey and the bishops. Style, metre, rhyme, language, art of every kind, is at an end;

[16] Lydgate, "Fall of Princes." Warton, ii. 280.
[17] The War of the Hussites, The Hundred Years' War, and The War of the Roses.
[18] About 1506. "The Temple of Glass." "Passetyme of Pleasure."
[19] About 1500.
[20] The court fool in Victor Hugo's drama of "Le Roi s'amuse."—Tr.
[21] Died 1529; Poet-Laureate 1489. His "Bouge of Court," his "Crown of Laurel," his "Elegy on the Death of the Earl of Northumberland," are well written, and belong to official poetry.

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beneath the vain parade of official style there is only a heap of rubbish. Yet, as he says,

> "Though my rhyme be ragged,
> Tattered and gagged,
> Rudely rain-beaten,
> Rusty, moth-eaten,
> Yf ye take welle therewithe,
> It hath in it some pithe."

It is full of political animus, sensual liveliness, English and popular instincts; it lives. It is a coarse life, still elementary, swarming with ignoble vermin, like that which appears in a great decomposing body. It is life, nevertheless, with its two great features which it is destined to display: the hatred of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is the Reformation; the return to the senses and to natural life, which is the Renaissance.

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BOOK II.—THE RENAISSANCE

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BOOK II.—THE RENAISSANCE

CHAPTER FIRST

THE PAGAN RENAISSANCE

PART I.—MANNERS OF THE TIME

Section I.—Ideas of the Middle Ages

FOR seventeen centuries a deep and sad thought had weighed upon the spirit of man, first to overwhelm it, then to exalt and to weaken it, never losing its hold throughout this long space of time. It was the idea of the weakness and decay of the human race. Greek corruption, Roman oppression, and the dissolution of the ancient world, had given rise to it; it, in its turn, had produced a stoical resignation, an epicurean indifference, Alexandrian mysticism, and the Christian hope in the kingdom of God. "The world is evil and lost, let us escape by insensibility, amazement, ecstasy." Thus spoke the philosophers; and religion, coming after, announced that the end was near; "Prepare, for the kingdom of God is at hand." For a thousand years universal ruin incessantly drove still deeper into their hearts this gloomy thought; and when man in the feudal state raised himself, by sheer force of courage and muscles, from the depths of final imbecility and general misery, he discovered his thought and his work fettered by the crushing idea, which, forbidding a life of nature and worldly hopes, erected into ideals the obedience of the monk and the dreams of fanatics.

It grew ever worse and worse. For the natural result of such a conception, as of the miseries which engender it, and the discouragement which it gives rise to, is to do away

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with personal action, and to replace originality by submission. From the fourth century, gradually the dead letter was substituted for the living faith. Christians resigned themselves into the hands of the clergy, they into the hands of the pope. Christian opinions were subordinated to theologians, and theologians to the Fathers. Christian faith was reduced to the accomplishment of works, and works to the accomplishment of ceremonies. Religion, fluid during the first centuries, was now congealed into a hard crystal, and the coarse contact of the barbarians had deposited upon its surface a layer of idolatry; theocracy and the Inquisition, the monopoly of the clergy and the prohibition of the Scriptures, the worship of relics and the sale of indulgences began to appear. In place of Christianity, the church; in place of a free creed, enforced orthodoxy; in place of moral fervor, fixed religious practices; in place of the heart and stirring thought, outward and mechanical discipline: such are the characteristics of the Middle Ages. Under this constraint thinking society had ceased to think; philosophy was turned into a text-book, and poetry into dotage; and mankind, slothful and crouching, delivering up their conscience and their conduct into the hands of their priests, seemed but as puppets, fit only for reciting a catechism and mumbling over beads.[1]

At last invention makes another start; and it makes it by the efforts of the lay society, which rejected theocracy, kept the State free, and which presently discovered, or rediscovered, one after another, the industries, sciences, and arts. All was renewed; America and the Indies were added to the map of the world; the shape of the earth was ascertained, the system of the universe propounded, modern philology was inaugurated, the experimental sciences set on foot, art and literature shot forth like a harvest, religion was transformed; there was no province of human intelligence and action which was not refreshed and fertilized by this universal effort. It was so great that it passed from the innovators to the laggards, and reformed Catholicism in the face of Protestantism which it formed. It seems as though men had suddenly opened their eyes and seen. In fact, they attain a new and superior kind of intelligence. It is the proper feature of this age that men no longer make themselves

[1] See, at Bruges, the pictures of Hemling (fifteenth century). No paintings enable us to understand so well the ecclesiastical piety of the Middle Ages, which was altogether like that of the Buddhists.

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masters of objects by bits, or isolated, or through scholastic or mechanical classifications, but as a whole, in general and complete views, with the eager grasp of a sympathetic spirit, which being placed before a vast object, penetrates it in all its parts, tries it in all its relations, appropriates and assimilates it, impresses upon itself its living and potent image, so life-like and so powerful, that it is fain to translate it into externals through a work of art or an action. An extraordinary warmth of soul, a superabundant and splendid imagination, reveries, visions, artists, believers, founders, creators—that is what such a form of intellect produces; for to create we must have, as had Luther and Loyola, Michel Angelo and Shakespeare, an idea, not abstract, partial, and dry, but well defined, finished, sensible—a true creation, which acts inwardly, and struggles to appear to the light. This was Europe's grand age, and the most notable epoch of human growth. To this day we live from its sap; we only carry on its pressure and efforts.

Section II.—Growth of New Ideas

When human power is manifested so clearly and in such great works, it is no wonder if the ideal changes, and the old pagan idea reappears. It recurs, bringing with it the worship of beauty and vigor, first in Italy; for this, of all countries in Europe, is the most pagan, and the nearest to the ancient civilization; thence in France and Spain, and Flanders, and even in Germany; and finally in England. How is it propagated? What revolution of manners reunited mankind at this time, everywhere, under a sentiment which they had forgotten for fifteen hundred years? Merely that their condition had improved, and they felt it. The idea ever expresses the actual situation, and the creatures of the imagination, like the conceptions of the mind, only manifest the state of society and the degree of its welfare; there is a fixed connection between what man admires and what he is. While misery overwhelms him, while the decadence is visible, and hope shut out, he is inclined to curse his life on earth, and seek consolation in another sphere. As soon as his sufferings are alleviated, his power made manifest, his prospects brightened, he begins once more to love the present

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life, to be self-confident, to love and praise energy, genius, all the effective faculties which labor to procure him happiness. About the twentieth year of Elizabeth's reign, the nobles gave up shield and two-handed sword for the rapier;[1] a little, almost imperceptible fact, yet vast, for it is like the change which sixty years ago made us give up the sword at court, to leave us with our arms swinging about in our black coats. In fact, it was the close of feudal life, and the beginning of court life, just as to-day court life is at an end, and the democratic reign has begun. With the two-handed swords, heavy coats of mail, feudal keeps, private warfare, permanent disorder, all the scourges of the Middle Ages retired, and faded into the past. The English had done with the Wars of the Roses. They no longer ran the risk of being pillaged to-morrow for being rich, and hanged the next day for being traitors; they have no further need to furbish up their armor, make alliances with powerful nations, lay in stores for the winter, gather together men-at-arms, scour the country to plunder and hang others.[2] The monarchy, in England, as throughout Europe, establishes peace in the community,[3] and with peace appear the useful arts. Domestic comfort follows civil security; and man, better furnished in his home, better protected in his hamlet, takes pleasure in his life on earth, which he has changed, and means to change.

Toward the close of the fifteenth century[4] the impetus was given; commerce and the woolen trade made a sudden advance, and such an enormous one that corn-fields were changed into pasture-lands, "whereby the inhabitants of the said town (Manchester) have gotten and come into riches and wealthy livings,"[5] so that in 1553, 40,000 pieces of cloth were exported in English ships. It was already the England which we see to-day, a land of green meadows, intersected by hedgerows, crowded with cattle, and abounding in ships—a manufacturing opulent land, with a people of beef-eating toilers, who enrich it while they enrich themselves. They improved agriculture to such an extent that in half a century the produce of an acre was

[1] The first carriage was in 1564. It caused much astonishment. Some said that it was "a great sea-shell brought from China"; others, "that it was a temple in which cannibals worshipped the devil."

[2] For a picture of this state of things, see Fenn's "Paston Letters."

[3] Louis XI in France, Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, Henry VII in England. In Italy the feudal régime ended earlier, by the establishment of republics and principalities.

[4] 1488, Act of Parliament on Enclosures.

[5] A "Compendious Examination," 1581, by William Strafford. Act of Parliament, 1541.

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doubled.[6] They grew so rich that at the beginning of the reign of Charles I the Commons represented three times the wealth of the Upper House. The ruin of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma [7] sent to England "the third part of the merchants and manufacturers, who made silk, damask, stockings, taffetas, and serges." The defeat of the Armada and the decadence of Spain opened the seas to English merchants.[8] The toiling hive, who would dare, attempt, explore, act in unison, and always with profit, was about to reap its advantages and set out on its voyages, buzzing over the universe.

At the base and on the summit of society, in all ranks of life, in all grades of human condition, this new welfare became visible. In 1534, considering that the streets of London were "very noyous and foul, and in many places thereof very jeopardous to all people passing and repassing, as well on horseback as on foot," Henry VIII began the paving of the city. New streets covered the open spaces where the young men used to run races and to wrestle. Every year the number of taverns, theatres, gambling-rooms, bear-gardens, increased. Before the time of Elizabeth the country-houses of gentlemen were little more than straw-thatched cottages, plastered with the coarsest clay, lighted only by trellises. "Howbeit," says Harrison (1580), "such as be latelie builded are commonlie either of bricke or hard stone, or both; their roomes large and comelie, and houses of office further distant from their lodgings." The old wooden houses were covered with plaster, "which, beside the delectable whitenesse of the stuffe itselfe, is laied on so even and smoothlie, as nothing in my judgment can be done with more exactnesse." [9] This open admiration shows from what hovels they had escaped. Glass was at last employed for windows, and the bare walls were covered with hangings, on which visitors might see, with delight and astonishment, plants, animals, figures. They began to use stoves, and experienced the unwonted pleasure of being warm. Harrison notes three important changes which had taken place in the farm-houses of his time:

[6] Between 1377 and 1588 the increase was from two and a half to five millions.

[7] In 1585; Ludovic Guicciardini.

[8] Henry VIII at the beginning of his reign had but one ship of war. Elizabeth sent out one hundred and fifty against the Armada. In 1553 was founded a company to trade with Russia. In 1578 Drake circumnavigated the globe. In 1600 the East India Company was founded.

[9] Nathan Drake, "Shakespeare and his Times," 1817, i. v. 72 et passim.

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"One is, the multitude of chimnies lately erected, whereas in their yoong daies there were not above two or three, if so manie, in most uplandishe townes of the realme. . . . The second is the great (although not generall), amendment of lodging, for our fathers (yea and we ourselves also) have lien full oft upon straw pallets, on rough mats covered onelie with a sheet, under coverlets made of dagswain, or hop-harlots, and a good round log under their heads, insteed of a bolster or pillow. If it were so that the good man of the house, had within seven yeares after his marriage purchased a matteres or flockebed, and thereto a sacke of chaffe to rest his head upon, he thought himselfe to be as well lodged as the lord of the towne. . . . Pillowes (said they) were thought meet onelie for women in childbed. . . . The third thing is the exchange of vessell, as of treene platters into pewter, and wodden spoones into silver or tin; for so common was all sorts of treene stuff in old time, that a man should hardlie find four peeces of pewter (of which one was peradventure a salt) in a good farmers house." [10]

It is not possession, but acquisition, which gives men pleasure and sense of power; they observe sooner a small happiness, new to them, than a great happiness which is old. It is not when all is good, but when all is better, that they see the bright side of life, and are tempted to make a holiday of it. This is why at this period they did make a holiday of it, a splendid show, so like a picture that it fostered painting in Italy, so like a piece of acting that it produced the drama in England. Now that the axe and sword of the civil wars had beaten down the independent nobility, and the abolition of the law of maintenance had destroyed the petty royalty of each great feudal baron, the lords quitted their sombre castles, battlemented fortresses, surrounded by stagnant water, pierced with narrow windows, a sort of stone breastplates of no use but to preserve the life of their master. They flock into new palaces with vaulted roofs and turrets, covered with fantastic and manifold ornaments, adorned with terraces and vast staircases, with gardens, fountains, statues, such as were the palaces of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, half Gothic and half Italian,[11] whose convenience, splendor, and symmetry announced already habits of society, and the taste for pleasure. They came to court and abandoned their old manners; the four meals which scarcely sufficed their former voracity were reduced to two; gentlemen soon became refined, placing

[10] Nathan Drake, "Shakespeare and his Times," i. v. 102.

[11] This was called the Tudor style. Under James I, in the hands of Inigo Jones, it became entirely Italian, approaching the antique.

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their glory in the elegance and singularity of their amusements and their clothes. They dressed magnificently in splendid materials, with the luxury of men who rustle silk and make gold sparkle for the first time: doublets of scarlet satin; cloaks of sable, costing a thousand ducats; velvet shoes, embroidered with gold and silver, covered with rosettes and ribbons; boots with falling tops, from whence hung a cloud of lace, embroidered with figures of birds, animals, constellations, flowers in silver, gold, or precious stones; ornamented shirts costing ten pounds a piece. "It is a common thing to put a thousand goats and a hundred oxen on a coat, and to carry a whole manor on one's back." [12] The costumes of the time were shrines. When Elizabeth died, they found three thousand dresses in her wardrobe. Need we speak of the monstrous ruffs of the ladies, their puffed-out dresses, their stomachers stiff with diamonds? As a singular sign of the times, the men were more changeable and more bedecked than they. Harrison says:

"Such is our mutabilitie, that to daie there is none to the Spanish guise, to morrow the French toies are most fine and delectable, yer long no such apparell as that which is after the high Alman fashion, by and by the Turkish maner is generallie best liked of, otherwise the Morisco gowns, the Barbarian sleeves . . . and the short French breeches. . . . And as these fashions are diverse, so likewise it is a world to see the costlinesse and the curiositie; the excesse and the vanitie; the pompe and the braverie; the change and the varietie; and finallie, the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees." [13]

Folly, it may have been, but poetry likewise. There was something more than puppyism in this masquerade of splendid costume. The overflow of inner sentiment found this issue, as also in drama and poetry. It was an artistic spirit which induced it. There was an incredible outgrowth of living forms from their brains. They acted like their engravers, who give us in their frontispieces a prodigality of fruits, flowers, active figures, animals, gods, and pour out and confuse the whole treasure of nature in every corner of their paper. They must enjoy the beautiful; they would be happy through their eyes; they perceive in consequence naturally the relief and energy of forms. From the accession of Henry VIII to the death of James I we

[12] Burton, "Anatomy of Melancholy," 12th ed. 1821. Stubbes, "Anatomie of Abuses," ed. Turnbull, 1836.

[13] Nathan Drake, "Shakespeare and his Times," ii. 6, 87.

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find nothing but tournaments, processions, public entries, masquerades. First come the royal banquets, coronation displays, large and noisy pleasures of Henry VIII. Wolsey entertains him

"In so gorgeous a sort and costlie maner, that it was an heaven to behold. There wanted no dames or damosels meet or apt to danse with the maskers, or to garnish the place for the time: then was there all kind of musike and harmonie, with fine voices both of men and children. On a time the king came suddenlie thither in a maske with a dozen maskers all in garments like sheepheards, made of fine cloth of gold, and crimosin sattin paned, . . . having sixteene torch-bearers. . . . In came a new banket before the king wherein were served two hundred diverse dishes, of costlie devises and subtilities. Thus passed they foorth the night with banketting, dansing, and other triumphs, to the great comfort of the king, and pleasant regard of the nobilitie there assembled." [14]

Count, if you can, the mythological entertainments, the theatrical receptions, the open-air operas played before Elizabeth, James, and their great lords.[15] At Kenilworth the pageants lasted ten days. There was everything; learned recreations, novelties, popular plays, sanguinary spectacles, coarse farces, juggling and feats of skill, allegories, mythologies, chivalric exhibitions, rustic and national commemorations. At the same time, in this universal outburst and sudden expanse, men become interested in themselves, find their life desirable, worthy of being represented and put on the stage complete; they play with it, delight in looking upon it, love its ups and downs, and make of it a work of art. The queen is received by a sibyl, then by giants of the time of Arthur, then by the Lady of the Lake, Sylvanus, Pomona, Ceres, and Bacchus, every divinity in turn presents her with the first-fruits of his empire. Next day, a savage, dressed in moss and ivy, discourses before her with Echo in her praise. Thirteen bears are set fighting against dogs. An Italian acrobat performs wonderful feats before the whole assembly. A rustic marriage takes place before the queen, then a sort of comic fight amongst the peasants of Coventry, who represent the defeat of the Danes. As she is returning from the chase, Triton, rising from the lake, prays her, in the name of

[14] Holinshed (1586), 1808, 6 vols. iii. 763 et passim.
[15] Ibid., Reign of Henry VIII. "Elizabeth and James Progresses," by Nichols.

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Neptune, to deliver the enchanted lady, pursued by a cruel knight, Syr Bruse sauns Pitee. Presently the lady appears, surrounded by nymphs, followed close by Proteus, who is borne by an enormous dolphin. Concealed in the dolphin, a band of musicians with a chorus of ocean-deities, sing the praise of the powerful, beautiful, chaste queen of England.[16] You perceive that comedy is not confined to the theatre; the great of the realm and the queen herself become actors. The cravings of the imagination are so keen that the court becomes a stage. Under James I, every year, on Twelfth-day, the queen, the chief ladies and nobles, played a piece called a Masque, a sort of allegory combined with dances, heightened in effect by decorations and costumes of great splendor, of which the mythological paintings of Rubens can alone give an idea:

"The attire of the lords was from the antique Greek statues. On their heads they wore Persic crowns, that were with scrolls of gold plate turned outward, and wreathed about with a carnation and silver net-lawn. Their bodies were of carnation cloth of silver; to express the naked, in manner of the Greek thorax, girt under the breasts with a broad belt of cloth of gold, fastened with jewels; the mantles were of coloured silke; the first, sky-colour; the second, pearl-colour; the third, flame colour; the fourth, tawny. The ladies attire was of white cloth of silver, wrought with Juno's birds and fruits; a loose under garment, full gathered, of carnation, striped with silver, and parted with a golden zone; beneath that, another flowing garment, of watchet cloth of silver, laced with gold; their hair carelessly bound under the circle of a rare and rich coronet, adorned with all variety, and choice of jewels; from the top of which flowed a transparent veil, down to the ground. Their shoes were azure and gold, set with rubies and diamonds." [17]

I abridge the description, which is like a fairy tale. Fancy that all these costumes, this glitter of materials, this sparkling of diamonds, this splendor of nudities, was displayed daily at the marriage of the great, to the bold sounds of a pagan epithalamium. Think of the feasts which the Earl of Carlisle introduced, where was served first of all a table loaded with sumptuous viands, as high as a man could reach, in order to remove it presently, and replace it by another similar table. This prodigality of magnificence, these costly follies, this unbridling of the imagination,

[16] Laneham's Entertainment at Killingworth Castle, 1575. Nichols's "Progresses," vol. i. London, 1788.

[17] Ben Jonson's works, ed. Gifford, 1816, 9 vols. "Masque of Hymen," vol. vii. 76.

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this intoxication of eye and ear, this comedy played by the lords of the realm, like the pictures of Rubens, Jordaens, and their Flemish contemporaries, so open an appeal to the senses, so complete a return to nature, that our chilled and gloomy age is scarcely able to imagine it.[18]

Section III.—Popular Festivals

To vent the feelings, to satisfy the heart and eyes, to set free boldly on all the roads of existence the pack of appetites and instincts, this was the craving which the manners of the time betrayed. It was "merry England," as they called it then. It was not yet stern and constrained. It expanded widely, freely, and rejoiced to find itself so expanded. No longer at court only was the drama found, but in the village. Strolling companies betook themselves thither, and the country folk supplied any deficiencies, when necessary. Shakespeare saw, before he depicted them, stupid fellows, carpenters, joiners, bellows-menders, play Pyramus and Thisbe, represent the lion roaring as gently as any sucking dove, and the wall, by stretching out their hands. Every holiday was a pageant, in which townspeople, workmen, and children bore their parts. They were actors by nature. When the soul is full and fresh, it does not express its ideas by reasonings; it plays and figures them; it mimics them; that is the true and original language, the children's tongue, the speech of artists, of invention, and of joy. It is in this manner they please themselves with songs and feasting, on all the symbolic holidays with which tradition has filled the year.[1] On the Sunday after Twelfth-night the laborers parade the streets, with their shirts over their coats, decked with ribbons, dragging a plough to the sound of music, and dancing a sword-dance; on another day they draw in a cart a figure made of ears of corn, with songs, flutes, and drums; on another, Father Christmas and his company; or else they enact the history of Robin Hood, the bold archer, around the May-pole, or the legend of Saint George and the Dragon. We might occupy half a volume in describing all these holidays, such as Harvest Home, All Saints,

[18] Certain private letters also describe the court of Elizabeth as a place where there was little piety or practice of religion, and where all enormities reigned in the highest degree.

[1] Nathan Drake, "Shakespeare and his Times," chap. v. and vi.

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Martinmas, Sheepshearing, above all Christmas, which lasted twelve days, and sometimes six weeks. They eat and drink, junket, tumble about, kiss the girls, ring the bells, satiate themselves with noise: coarse drunken revels, in which man is an unbridled animal, and which are the incarnation of natural life. The Puritans made no mistake about that. Stubbes says:

"First, all the wilde heades of the parishe, conventying together, chuse them a ground capitaine of mischeef, whan they innoble with the title of my Lorde of Misserule, and hym they crown with great solemnitie, and adopt for their kyng. This kyng anoynted, chuseth for the twentie, fourtie, three score, or a hundred lustie guttes like to hymself to waite uppon his lordely maiestie. . . . Then have they their hobbie horses, dragons, and other antiques, together with their baudie pipers and thunderyng drommers, to strike up the devilles daunce withall: then marche these heathen companie towardes the churche and churche-yarde, their pipers pipyng, their drommers thonderyng, their stumppes dauncyng, their belles rynglyng, their handkerchefes swyngyng about their heads like madmen, their hobbie horses and other monsters skirmishyng amongest the throng; and in this sorte they goe to the churche (though the minister be at praier or preachyng), dauncyng, and swingyng their handkercheefes over their heades, in the churche, like devilles incarnate, with such a confused noise, that no man can heare his owne voice. Then the foolishe people they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere, and mount upon formes and pewes, to see these goodly pageauntes, solemnized in this sort. Then after this, aboute the churche they goe againe and againe, and so forthe into the churche-yarde, where they have commonly their sommer haules, their bowers, arbours, and banquettyng houses set up, wherein they feaste, banquet, and daunce all that daie, and peradventure all that night too. And thus these terrestriall furies spend the Sabbaoth daie! . . . An other sorte of fantasticall fooles bringe to these helhoundes (the Lorde of Misrule and his complices) some bread, some good ale, some newe cheese, some olde cheese, some custardes, some cakes, some flaunes, some tartes, some creame, some meate, some one thing, some an other."

He continues thus:

"Against Maie, every parishe, towne and village essemble themselves together, bothe men, women, and children, olde and yong, even all indifferently; they goe to the woodes where they spende all the night in pleasant pastymes, and in the mornyng they returne, bringing with them birch, bowes, and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall. But their cheefest iewell they bringe from thence is their Maie poole, whiche they bring home with great veneration, as thus: They have twenty or fourtie yoke of oxen, every ox havyng a sweete nosegaie of flowers tyed on the tippe of his hornes, and these oxen, drawe home this Maie poole (this stinckyng idoll rather) . . . and thus beyng

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reared up, they strawe the grounde aboute, binde greene boughes about it, sett up sommer haules, bowers, and arbours hard by it; and then fall they to banquet and feast, to leape and daunce aboute it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idolles. . . . Of a hundred maides goyng to the woode over night, there have scarcely the third parte returned home againe undefiled." [2]

"On Shrove Tuesday," says another,[2] "at the sound of a bell, the folk become insane, thousands at a time, and forget all decency and common-sense. . . . It is to Satan and the devil that they pay homage and do sacrifice to in these abominable pleasures." It is in fact to nature, to the ancient Pan, to Freya, to Hertha, her sisters, to the old Teutonic deities who survived the Middle Ages. At this period, in the temporary decay of Christianity, and the sudden advance of corporal well-being, man adored himself, and there endured no life within him but that of paganism.

Section IV.—Influence of Classic Literature

To sum up, observe the process of ideas at this time. A few sectarians, chiefly in the towns and of the people, clung gloomily to the Bible. But the court and the men of the world sought their teachers and their heroes from pagan Greece and Rome. About 1490[1] they began to read the classics; one after the other they translated them; it was soon the fashion to read them in the original. Queen Elizabeth, Jane Grey, the Duchess of Norfolk, the Countess of Arundel, and many other ladies, were conversant with Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero in the original, and appreciated them. Gradually, by an insensible change, men were raised to the level of the great and healthy minds who had freely handled ideas of all kinds fifteen centuries before. They comprehended not only their language, but their thought; they did not repeat lessons from, but held conversations with them; they were their equals, and found in them intellects as manly as their own. For they were not scholastic cavillers, miserable compilers, repulsive pedants, like the professors of jargon whom the Middle Ages had set over them, like gloomy Duns Scotus,

[2] Stubbes, "Anatomie of Abuses," p. 168 et passim.
[3] Hentzner's "Travels in England" (Bentley's translation). He thought that the figure carried about in the Harvest Home represented Ceres.

[1] Warton, vol. ii. sec. 35. Before 1600 all the great poets were translated into English, and between 1550 and 1616 all the great historians of Greece and Rome. Lyly in 1500 first taught Greek in public.

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whose leaves Henry VIII's visitors scattered to the winds. They were gentlemen, statesmen, the most polished and best educated men in the world, who knew how to speak, and draw their ideas, not from books, but from things, living ideas, and which entered of themselves into living souls. Across the train of hooded schoolmen and sordid cavillers the two adult and thinking ages were united, and the moderns, silencing the infantine or snuffling voices of the Middle Ages, condescended only to converse with the noble ancients. They accepted their gods, at least they understand them, and keep them by their side. In poems, festivals, on hangings, almost in all ceremonies, they appear, not restored by pedantry merely, but kept alive by sympathy, and endowed by the arts with a life as flourishing and almost as profound as that of their earliest birth. After the terrible night of the Middle Ages, and the dolorous legends of spirits and the damned, it was a delight to see again Olympus shining upon us from Greece; its heroic and beautiful deities once more ravishing the heart of men; they raised and instructed this young world by speaking to it the language of passion and genius; and this age of strong deeds, free sensuality, bold invention, had only to follow its own bent, in order to discover in them its masters and the eternal promoters of liberty and beauty.

Nearer still was another paganism, that of Italy; the more seductive because more modern, and because it circulates fresh sap in an ancient stock; the more attractive, because more sensuous and present, with its worship of force and genius, of pleasure and voluptuousness. The rigorists knew this well, and were shocked at it. Ascham writes:

"These bee the inchantementes of Circes, brought out of Italie to marre mens maners in England; much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fonde bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London. . . . There bee moe of these ungratious bookes set out in Printe wythin these fewe monethes, than have bene sene in England many score yeares before. . . . Than they have in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche: than the Genesis of Moses: They make more account of Tullies offices, than S. Paules epistles: of a tale in Bocace than a storie of the Bible." [2]

In fact, at that time Italy clearly led in everything, and civilization was to be drawn thence, as from its spring. What is this

[2] Ascham, "The Scholemaster" (1570), ed. Arber, 1870, first book, 78 et passim.

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civilization which is thus imposed on the whole of Europe, whence every science and every elegance comes, whose laws are obeyed in every court, in which Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare sought their models and their materials? It was pagan in its elements and its birth; in its language, which is but Latin, hardly changed; in its Latin traditions and recollections, which no gap has interrupted; in its constitution, whose old municipal life first led and absorbed the feudal life; in the genius of its race, in which energy and joy always abounded. More than a century before other nations—from the time of Petrarch, Rienzi, Boccaccio—the Italians began to recover the lost antiquity, to set free the manuscripts buried in the dungeons of France and Germany, to restore, interpret, comment upon, study the ancients, to make themselves Latin in heart and mind, to compose in prose and verse with the polish of Cicero and Vergil, to hold sprightly converse and intellectual pleasures as the ornament and the fairest flower of life.[3] They adopt not merely the externals of the life of the ancients, but its very essence; that is, preoccupation with the present life, forgetfulness of the future, the appeal to the senses, the renunciation of Christianity. "We must enjoy," sang their first poet, Lorenzo de Medici, in his pastorals and triumphal songs: "there is no certainty of tomorrow." In Pulci the mocking incredulity breaks out, the bold and sensual gayety, all the audacity of the free-thinkers, who kicked aside in disgust the worn-out monkish frock of the Middle Ages. It was he who, in a jesting poem, puts at the beginning of each canto a Hosanna, an *In principio*, or a sacred text from the mass-book.[4] When he had been inquiring what the soul was, and how it entered the body, he compared it to jam covered up in white bread quite hot. What would become of it in the other world? "Some people think they will there discover becafico's, plucked ortolans, excellent wine, good beds, and therefore they follow the monks, walking behind them. As for us, dear friend, we shall go into the black valley, where we shall hear no more Alleluias." If you wish for a more serious thinker, listen to the great patriot, the Thucydides

[3] Ma il vero e principal ornemento dell' animo in ciascuno penso io che siano le lettere, benchè i Franchesi solamente conoscano la nobilità dell'arme . . . et tutti i litterati tengon per vilissimi huomini. Castiglione, "Il Cortegiano," ed. 1585, p. 112.

[4] See Burchard (the Pope's Steward), account of the festival at which Lucretia Borgia was present. Letters of Aretinus, "Life of Cellini," etc.

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of the age, Machiavelli, who, contrasting Christianity and paganism, says that the first places "supreme happiness in humility, abjection, contempt for human things, while the other makes the sovereign good consist in greatness of soul, force of body, and all the qualities which make men to be feared." Whereon he boldly concludes that Christianity teaches man "to support evils, and not to do great deeds"; he discovers in that inner weakness the cause of all oppressions; declares that "the wicked saw that they could tyrannize without fear over men, who, in order to get to paradise, were more disposed to suffer than to avenge injuries." Through such sayings, in spite of his constrained genuflexions, we can see which religion he prefers. The ideal to which all efforts were turning, on which all thoughts depended, and which completely raised this civilization, was the strong and happy man, possessing all the powers to accomplish his wishes, and disposed to use them in pursuit of his happiness.

If you would see this idea in its grandest operation, you must seek it in the arts, such as Italy made them and carried throughout Europe, raising or transforming the national schools with such originality and vigor that all art likely to survive is derived from hence, and the population of living figures with which they have covered our walls denotes, like Gothic architecture of French tragedy, a unique epoch of human intelligence. The attenuated mediæval Christ—a miserable, distorted, and bleeding earth-worm; the pale and ugly Virgin—a poor old peasant woman, fainting beside the cross of her Son; ghastly martyrs, dried up with fasts, with entranced eyes; knotty-fingered saints with sunken chests—all the touching or lamentable visions of the Middle Ages have vanished: the train of godheads which are now developed show nothing but flourishing frames, noble, regular features, and fine, easy gestures; the names, the names only, are Christian. The new Jesus is a "crucified Jupiter," as Pulci called him; the Virgins which Raphael sketched naked, before covering them with garments,[5] are beautiful girls, quite earthly, related to the Fornarina. The saints which Michel Angelo arranges and contorts in heaven in his picture of the Last Judgment are an assembly of athletes, capable of

[5] See his sketches at Oxford, and those of Fra Bartolomeo at Florence. See also the Martyrdom of St. Laurence, by Baccio Bandinelli.

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fighting well and daring much. A martyrdom, like that of Saint Laurence, is a fine ceremony in which a beautiful young man, without clothing, lies amidst fifty men dressed and grouped as in an ancient gymnasium. Is there one of them who had macerated himself? Is there one who had thought with anguish and tears of the judgment of God, who had worn down and subdued his flesh, who had filled his heart with the sadness and sweetness of the gospel? They are too vigorous for that; they are in too robust health; their clothes fit them too well; they are too ready for prompt and energetic action. We might make of them strong soldiers or superb courtesans, admirable in a pageant or at a ball. So, all that the spectator accords to their halo of glory is a bow or a sign of the cross; after which his eyes find pleasure in them; they are there simply for the enjoyment of the eyes. What the spectator feels at the sight of a Florentine Madonna is the splendid creature, whose powerful body and fine growth bespeak her race and her vigor; the artist did not paint moral expression as nowadays, the depth of a soul tortured and refined by three centuries of culture. They confine themselves to the body, to the extent even of speaking enthusiastically of the spinal column itself, "which is magnificent"; of the shoulder-blades, which in the movements of the arm "produce an admirable effect." "You will next draw the bone which it situated between the hips. It is very fine, and is called the sacrum."[6] The important point with them is to represent the nude well. Beauty with them is that of the complete skeleton, sinews which are linked together and tightened, the thighs which support the trunk, the strong chest breathing freely, the pliant neck. What a pleasure to be naked! How good it is in the full light to rejoice in a strong body, well-formed muscles, a spirited and bold soul! The splendid goddesses reappear in their primitive nudity, not dreaming that they are nude; you see from the tranquillity of their look, the simplicity of their expression, that they have always been thus, and that shame has not yet reached them. The soul's life is not here contrasted, as amongst us, with the body's life; the one is not so lowered and degraded that we dare not show its actions and functions; they do not hide them; man does not dream of being all spirit. They rise, as of old, from the luminous sea, with

[6] Benvenuto Cellini, "Principles of the Art of Design."

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their rearing steeds tossing up their manes, champing the bit, inhaling the briny savor, whilst their companions wind the sounding-shell; and the spectators,[7] accustomed to handle the sword, to combat naked with the dagger or double-handled blade, to ride on perilous roads, sympathize with the proud shape of the bended back, the effort of the arm about to strike, the long quiver of the muscles which, from neck to heel, swell out, to brace a man, or to throw him.

Part II.—Poetry

Section I.—Renaissance of Saxon Genius

Transplanted into different races and climates, this paganism receives from each, distinct features and a distinct character. In England it becomes English; the English Renaissance is the Renaissance of the Saxon genius. Invention recommences; and to invent is to express one's genius. A Latin race can only invent by expressing Latin ideas; a Saxon race by expressing Saxon ideas; and we shall find in the new civilization and poetry, descendants of Cædmon and Adhelm, of Piers Plowman, and Robin Hood.

Section II.—The Earl of Surrey

Old Puttenham says:

"In the latter end of the same king (Henry the eighth) reigne, sprong up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyat th' elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Arioste, and Petrarch, they greatly pollished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile." [1]

[7] "Life of Cellini." Compare also these exercises which Castiglione prescribes for a well-educated man, in his "Cortegiano," ed. 1585, p. 55: "Però voglio che il nostro cortegiano sia perfetto cavaliere d'ogni sella. . . . Et perchè degli Italiani è peculiar laude il cavalcare benè alla brida, il maneggiar con raggione massimamente cavalli aspri, il corre lance, il giostare, sia in questo de meglior Italiani. . . . Nel torneare, tener un passo, combattere una sbarra, sia buono tra il miglior francesi. . . . Nel giocare a canne, correr torri, lanciar haste e dardi, sia tra Spagnuoli eccelente. . . . Conveniente è ancor sapere saltare, e correre; . . . ancor nobile exercitio il gioco di palla. . . . Non di minor laude estimo il voltegiar a cavallo."

[1] Puttenham, "The Arte of English Poesie," ed. Arber, 1869, book i. ch. 31, p. 74.

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Not that their style was very original, or openly exhibits the new spirit: the Middle Ages is nearly ended, but not quite. By their side Andrew Borde, John Bale, John Heywood, Skelton himself, repeat the platitudes of the old poetry and the coarseness of the old style. Their manners, hardly refined, were still half feudal; on the field, before Landrecies, the English commander wrote a friendly letter to the French governor of Térouanne, to ask him "if he had not some gentlemen disposed to break a lance in honor of the ladies," and promised to send six champions to meet them. Parades, combats, wounds, challenges, love, appeals to the judgment of God, penances—all these are found in the life of Surrey as in a chivalric romance. A great lord, an earl, a relative of the king, who had figured in processions and ceremonies, had made war, commanded fortresses, ravaged countries, mounted to the assault, fallen in the breach, had been saved by his servant, magnificent, sumptuous, irritable, ambitious, four times imprisoned, finally beheaded. At the coronation of Anne Boleyn he wore the fourth sword; at the marriage of Anne of Cleves he was one of the challengers at the jousts. Denounced and placed in durance, he offered to fight in his shirt against an armed adversary. Another time he was put in prison for having eaten flesh in Lent. No wonder if this prolongation of chivalric manners brought with it a prolongation of chivalric poetry; if in an age which had known Petrarch, poets displayed the sentiments of Petrarch. Lord Berners, Sackville, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Surrey in the first rank, were like Petrarch, plaintive and platonic lovers. It was pure love to which Surrey gave expression; for his lady, the beautiful Geraldine, like Beatrice and Laura, was an ideal personage, and a child of thirteen years.

And yet, amid this languor of mystical tradition, a personal feeling had sway. In this spirit which imitated, and that badly at times, which still groped for an outlet and now and then admitted into its polished stanzas the old, simple expressions and stale metaphors of heralds of arms and *trouvères,* there was already visible the Northern melancholy, the inner and gloomy emotion. This feature, which presently, at the finest moment of its richest blossom, in the splendid expansiveness of natural life, spreads a sombre tint over the poetry of Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, already in the first poet separates this pagan yet

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Teutonic world from the other, wholly voluptuous, which in Italy, with lively and refined irony, had no taste, except for art and pleasure. Surrey translated the Ecclesiastes into verse. Is it not singular, at this early hour, in this rising dawn, to find such a book in his hand? A disenchantment, a sad or bitter dreaminess, an innate consciousness of the vanity of human things, are never lacking in this country and in this race; the inhabitants support life with difficulty, and know how to speak of death. Surrey's finest verses bear witness thus soon to his serious bent, this instinctive and grave philosophy. He records his griefs, regretting his beloved Wyatt, his friend Clère, his companion the young Duke of Richmond, all dead in their prime. Alone, a prisoner at Windsor, he recalls the happy days they have passed together:

"So cruel prison how could betide, alas,
As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy,
With a Kinges son, my childish years did pass,
In greater feast than Priam's son of Troy.

"Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour,
The large green courts, where we were wont to hove,
With eyes cast up into the Maiden's tower,
And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love.

"The stately seats, the ladies bright of hue,
The dances short, long tales of great delight,
With words and looks, that tigers could but rue;
Where each of us did plead the other's right.

"The palme-play, where, despoiled for the game,
With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love
Have miss'd the ball, and got sight of our dame,
To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above. . . .

"The secret thoughts, imparted with such trust;
The wanton talk, the divers change of play;
The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,
Wherewith we past the winter night away.

"And with his thought the blood forsakes the face;
The tears berain my cheeks of deadly hue:
The which, as soon as sobbing sighs, alas!
Up-supped have, thus I my plaint renew:

"O place of bliss! renewer of my woes!
Give me account, where is my noble fere?

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Whom in thy walls thou dost each night enclose;
To other lief; but unto me most dear.

"Echo, alas! that doth my sorrow rue,
Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint." [2]

So in love, it is the sinking of a weary soul, to which he gives vent:

"For all things having life, sometime hath quiet rest;
The bearing ass, the drawing ox, and every other beast;
The peasant, and the post, that serves at all assays;
The ship-boy, and the galley-slave, have time to take their ease;
Save I, alas! whom care of force doth so constrain,
To wail the day, and wake the night, continually in pain,
From pensiveness to plaint, from plaint to bitter tears,
From tears to painful plaint again; and thus my life it wears." [3]

That which brings joy to others brings him grief:

"The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;
The hart has hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs!" [4]

For all that, he will love on to his last sigh:

"Yea, rather die a thousand times, than once to false my faith;
And if my feeble corpse, through weight of woful smart
Do fail, or faint, my will it is that still she keep my heart.
And when this carcass here to earth shall be refar'd,
I do bequeath my wearied ghost to serve her afterward." [5]

An infinite love, and pure as Petrarch's; and she is worthy of it. In the midst of all these studied or imitated verses, an ad-

[2] Surrey's "Poems," Pickering, 1831, p. 17.
[3] Ibid. "The faithful lover declareth his pains and his uncertain joys, and with only hope recomforteth his woful heart," p. 53.
[4] Ibid. "Description of Spring, wherein everything renews, save only the lover," p. 2.
[5] Ibid. p. 50.

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mirable portrait stands out, the simplest and truest we can imagine, a work of the heart now, and not of the memory, which behind the Madonna of chivalry shows the English wife, and beyond feudal gallantry domestic bliss. Surrey alone, restless, hears within him the firm tones of a good friend, a sincere counsellor, Hope, who speaks to him thus:

"For I assure thee, even by oath,
And thereon take my hand and troth,
That she is one of the worthiest,
The truest, and the faithfullest;
The gentlest and the meekest of mind
That here on earth a man may find:
And if that love and truth were gone,
In her it might be found alone.
For in her mind no thought there is,
But how she may be true, I wis;
And tenders thee and all thy heale,
And wishes both thy health and weal;
And loves thee even as far forth than
As any woman may a man;
And is thine own, and so she says;
And cares for thee ten thousand ways.
Of thee she speaks, on thee she thinks;
With thee she eats, with thee she drinks;
With thee she talks, with thee she moans;
With thee she sighs, with thee she groans;
With thee she says 'Farewell mine own!'
When thou, God knows, full far art gone.
And even, to tell thee all aright,
To thee she says full oft 'Good night!'
And names thee oft her own most dear,
Her comfort, weal, and all her cheer;
And tells her pillow all the tale
How thou hast done her woe and bale;
And how she longs, and plains for thee,
And says, 'Why art thou so from me?'
Am I not she that loves thee best!
Do I not wish thine ease and rest?
Seek I not how I may thee please?
Why art thou then so from thine ease?
If I be she for whom thou carest,
For whom in torments so thou farest,
Alas! thou knowest to find me here,
Where I remain thine own most dear.
Thine own most true, thine own most just,
Thine own that loves thee still, and must;

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Thine own that cares alone for thee,
As thou, I think, dost care for me;
And even the woman, she alone,
That is full bent to be thine own." [6]

Certainly it is of his wife [7] that he is thinking here, not of an imaginary Laura. The poetic dream of Petrarch has become the exact picture of deep and perfect conjugal affection, such as yet survives in England; such as all the poets, from the authoress of the "Nutbrown Maid" to Dickens,[8] have never failed to represent.

Section III.—Surrey's Style

An English Petrarch: no juster title could be given to Surrey, for it expresses his talent as well as his disposition. In fact, like Petrarch, the oldest of the humanists, and the earliest exact writer of the modern tongue, Surrey introduces a new style, the manly style, which marks a great change of the mind; for this new form of writing is the result of superior reflection, which, governing the primitive impulse, calculates and selects with an end in view. At last the intellect has grown capable of self-criticism, and actually criticises itself. It corrects its unconsidered works, infantine and incoherent, at once incomplete and superabundant; it strengthens and binds them together; it prunes and perfects them; it takes from them the master idea, to set it free and to show it clearly. This is what Surrey does, and his education had prepared him for it; for he had studied Vergil as well as Petrarch, and translated two books of the Æneid, almost verse for verse. In such company a man cannot but select his ideas and connect his phrases. After their example, Surrey gauges the means of striking the attention, assisting the intelligence, avoiding fatigue and weariness. He looks forward to the last line whilst writing the first. He keeps the strongest word for the last, and shows the symmetry of ideas by the symmetry of phrases. Sometimes he guides the intelligence by a continuous series of contrasts to the final image; a kind of sparkling casket, in which he means to deposit the idea which

[6] Surrey's "Poems." "A description of the restless state of the lover when absent from the mistress of his heart," p. 78.

[7] In another piece, "Complaint on the Absence of her Lover being upon the Sea," he speaks in direct terms of his wife, almost as affectionately.

[8] Greene, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Shakespeare, Ford, Otway, Richardson, De Foe, Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, etc.

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he carries, and to which he directs our attention from the first.[1] Sometimes he leads his reader to the close of a long flowery description, and then suddenly checks him with a sorrowful phrase.[2] He arranges his process, and knows how to produce effects; he uses even classical expressions, in which two substantives, each supported by its adjective, are balanced on either side of the verb.[3] He collects his phrases in harmonious periods, and does not neglect the delight of the ears any more than of the mind. By his inversions he adds force to his ideas, and weight to his argument. He selects elegant or noble terms, rejects idle words and redundant phrases. Every epithet contains an idea, every metaphor a sentiment. There is eloquence in the regular development of his thought; music in the sustained accent of his verse.

Such is the new-born art. Those who have ideas, now possess an instrument capable of expressing them. Like the Italian painters, who in fifty years had introduced or discovered all the technical tricks of the brush, English writers, in half a century, introduce or discover all the artifices of language, period, elevated style, heroic verse, soon the grand stanza, so effectually, that a little later the most perfect versifiers, Dryden, and Pope himself, says Dr. Nott, will add scarce anything to the rules, invented or applied, which were employed in the earliest efforts.[4] Even Surrey is too near to these authors, too constrained in his models, not sufficiently free; he has not yet felt the fiery blast of the age; we do not find in him a bold genius, an impassioned writer capable of wide expansion, but a courtier, a lover of elegance, who, penetrated by the beauties of two finished literatures, imitates Horace and the chosen masters of Italy, corrects and polishes little morsels, aims at speaking perfectly fine language. Amongst semi-barbarians he wears a full dress becomingly. Yet he does not wear it completely at his ease: he keeps his eyes too exclusively on his models, and does not venture on frank and free gestures. He is sometimes as a school-boy, makes too great use of "hot" and "cold," wounds and martyrdom. Although a lover, and a genuine one, he thinks too much that he must be so in Petrarch's manner, that his phrase must

[1] "The Frailty and Hurtfulness of Beauty."
[2] "Description of Spring." "A Vow to Love Faithfully."
[3] "Complaint of the Lover Disdained."
[4] Surrey, ed. Nott.

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be balanced and his image kept up. I had almost said that, in his sonnets of disappointed love, he thinks less often of the strength of love than of the beauty of his writing. He has conceits, ill-chosen words; he uses trite expressions; he relates how Nature, having formed his lady, broke the mould, he assigns parts to Cupid and Venus; he employs the old machinery of the troubadours and the ancients, like a clever man who wishes to pass for a gallant. At first scarce any mind dares be quite itself: when a new art arises, the first artist listens not to his heart, but to his masters, and asks himself at every step whether he be setting foot on solid ground, or whether he is not stumbling.

Section IV.—Development of Artistic Ideas

Insensibly the growth became complete, and at the end of the century all was changed. A new, strange, overloaded style had been formed, destined to remain in force until the Restoration, not only in poetry, but also in prose, even in ceremonial speech and theological discourse,[1] so suitable to the spirit of the age that we meet with it at the same time throughout the world of Europe, in Ronsard and d'Aubigné, in Calderon, Gongora, and Marini. In 1580 appeared "Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit," by Lyly, which was its text-book, its masterpiece, its caricature, and was received with universal admiration.[2] "Our nation," says Edward Blount, "are in his debt for a new English which hee taught them. All our ladies were then his scollers; and that beautie in court who could not parley Euphuesme was as little regarded as shee which now there speakes not French." The ladies knew the phrases of Euphues by heart: strange, studied, and refined phrases, enigmatical; whose author seems of set purpose to seek the least natural expressions and the most far-fetched, full of exaggeration and antithesis, in which mythological allusions, reminiscences from alchemy, botanical and astronomical metaphors, all the rubbish and medley of learning, travels, mannerism, roll in a flood of conceits and comparisons. Do not judge it by the grotesque picture that Walter Scott drew

[1] The Speaker's address to Charles II on his restoration. Compare it with the speech of M. de Fontanes under the Empire. In each case it was the close of a literary epoch. Read for illustration the speech before the University of Oxford, "Athenæ Oxonienses," i. 193.

[2] His second work, "Euphues and his England," appeared in 1581.

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of it. Sir Piercie Shafton is but a pedant, a cold and dull copyist; it is its warmth and originality which give this style a true force and an accent of its own. You must conceive it, not as dead and inert, such as we have it to-day in old books, but springing from the lips of ladies and young lords in pearl-bedecked doublet, quickened by their vibrating voices, their laughter, the flash of their eyes, the motion of their hands as they played with the hilt of their swords or with their satin cloaks. They were full of life, their heads filled to overflowing; and they amused themselves, as our sensitive and eager artists do, at their ease in the studio. They did not speak to convince or be understood, but to satisfy their excited imagination, to expend their overflowing wit.[1] They played with words, twisted, put them out of shape, enjoyed sudden views, strong contrasts, which they produced one after another, ever and anon, and in great quantities. They cast flower on flower, tinsel on tinsel: everything sparkling delighted them; they gilded and embroidered and plumed their language like their garments. They cared nothing for clearness, order, common-sense; it was a festival of madness; absurdity pleased them. They knew nothing more tempting than a carnival of splendors and oddities; all was huddled together: a coarse gayety, a tender and sad word, a pastoral, a sounding flourish of unmeasured boasting, a gambol of a Jack-pudding. Eyes, ears, all the senses, eager and excited, are satisfied by this jingle of syllables, the display of fine high-colored words, the unexpected clash of droll or familiar images, the majestic roll of well-poised periods. Every one had his own oaths, his elegances, his style. "One would say," remarks Heylyn, "that they are ashamed of their mother-tongue, and do not find it sufficiently varied to express the whims of their mind." We no longer imagine this inventiveness, this boldness of fancy, this ceaseless fertility of nervous sensibility: there was no genuine prose at that time; the poetic flood swallowed it up. A word was not an exact symbol, as with us; a document which from cabinet to cabinet carried a precise thought. It was part of a complete action, a little drama; when they read it they did not take it by itself, but imagined it with the intonation of a hissing and shrill voice, with the puckering of the lips, the knitting of the brows, and the succession of pictures which crowd behind it,

[1] See Shakespeare's young men, Mercutio especially.

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and which it calls forth in a flash of lightning. Each one mimics and pronounces it in his own style, and impresses his own soul upon it. It was a song, which like the poet's verse, contains a thousand things besides the literal sense, and manifests the depth, warmth, and sparkling of the source whence it flowed. For in that time, even when the man was feeble, his work lived; there is some pulse in the least productions of this age; force and creative fire signalize it; they penetrate through bombast and affectation. Lyly himself, so fantastic that he seems to write purposely in defiance of common-sense, is at times a genuine poet; a singer, a man capable of rapture, akin to Spenser and Shakespeare; one of those introspective dreamers who see dancing fairies, the purpled cheeks of goddesses, drunken, amorous woods, as he says

> "Adorned with the presence of my love,
> The woods I fear such secret power shall prove,
> As they'll shut up each path, hide every way,
> Because they still would have her go astray." [4]

The reader must assist me, and assist himself. I cannot otherwise give him to understand what the men of this age had the felicity to experience.

Luxuriance and irregularity were the two features of this spirit and this literature—features common to all the literatures of the Renaissance, but more marked here than elsewhere, because the German race is not confined, like the Latin, by the taste for harmonious forms, and prefers strong impression to fine expression. We must select amidst this crowd of poets; and here is one amongst the first, who exhibits, by his writings as well as by his life, the greatness and the folly of the prevailing manners and the public taste: Sir Philip Sidney, nephew of the Earl of Leicester, a great lord and a man of action, accomplished in every kind of culture; who, after a good training in classical literature, travelled in France, Germany, and Italy; read Plato and Aristotle, studied astronomy and geometry at Venice; pondered over the Greek tragedies, the Italian sonnets, the pastorals of Montemayor, the poems of Ronsard; displaying an interest in science, keeping up an exchange of letters with the learned Hubert Languet; and withal a man of the world, a favorite of

[4] "The Maid her Metamorphosis."

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Elizabeth, having had enacted in her honor a flattering and comic pastoral; a genuine "jewel of the court"; a judge, like d'Urfé, of lofty gallantry and fine language; above all, chivalrous in heart and deed, who wished to follow maritime adventure with Drake, and, to crown all, fated to die an early and heroic death. He was a cavalry officer, and had saved the English army at Gravelines. Shortly after, mortally wounded, and dying of thirst, as some water was brought to him, he saw by his side a soldier still more desperately hurt, who was looking at the water with anguish in his face: "Give it to this man," said he; "his necessity is still greater than mine." Do not forget the vehemence and impetuosity of the Middle Ages; one hand ready for action, and kept incessantly on the hilt of the sword or poniard. "Mr. Molineux," wrote he to his father's secretary, "if ever I know you to do so much as read any letter I write to my father, without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak it in earnest." It was the same man who said to his uncle's adversaries that they "lied in their throat"; and to support his words, promised them a meeting in three months in any place in Europe. The savage energy of the preceding age remains intact, and it is for this reason that poetry took so firm a hold on these virgin souls. The human harvest is never so fine as when cultivation opens up a new soil. Impassioned, moreover, melancholy and solitary, he naturally turned to noble and ardent fantasy; and he was so much the poet that he had no need of verse.

Shall I describe his pastoral epic, the "Arcadia"? It is but a recreation, a sort of poetical romance, written in the country for the amusement of his sister; a work of fashion, which, like "Cyrus" and "Clélie,"[6] is not a monument, but a document. This kind of books shows only the externals, the current elegance and politeness, the jargon of the fashionable world—in short, that which should be spoken before ladies; and yet we perceive from it the bent of the public opinion. In "Clélie," oratorical development, delicate and collected analysis, the flowing converse of men seated quietly in elegant arm-chairs; in the "Arcadia," fantastic imagination, excessive sentiment, a medley of events which suited men scarcely recovered from barbarism. Indeed,

[6] Two French novels of the age of Louis XIV, each in ten volumes, and written by Mademoiselle de Scudéry.—Tr.

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in London they still used to fire pistols at each other in the streets; and under Henry VIII and his children, Queens, a Protector, the highest nobles, knelt under the axe of the executioner. Armed and perilous existence long resisted in Europe the establishment of peaceful and quiet life. It was necessary to change society and the soil, in order to transform men of the sword into citizens. The high roads of Louis XIV and his regular administration, and more recently the railroads and the *sergents de ville*, freed the French from habits of violence and a taste for dangerous adventure. Remember that at this period men's heads were full of tragical images. Sidney's "Arcadia" contains enough of them to supply half a dozen epics. "It is a trifle," says the author; "my young head must be delivered." In the first twenty-five pages you meet with a shipwreck, an account of pirates, a half-drowned prince rescued by shepherds, a journey in Arcadia, various disguises, the retreat of a king withdrawn into solitude with his wife and children, the deliverance of a young imprisoned lord, a war against the Helots, the conclusion of peace, and many other things. Read on, and you will find princesses shut up by a wicked fairy, who beats them, and threatens them with death if they refuse to marry her son; a beautiful queen condemned to perish by fire if certain knights do not come to her succor; a treacherous prince tortured for his wicked deeds, then cast from the top of a pyramid; fights, surprises, abductions, travels: in short, the whole programme of the most romantic tales. That is the serious element: the agreeable is of a like nature; the fantastic predominates. Improbable pastoral serves, as in Shakespeare or Lope de Vega, for an intermezzo to improbable tragedy. You are always coming upon dancing shepherds. They are very courteous, good poets, and subtle metaphysicians. Several of them are disguised princes who pay their court to the princesses. They sing continually, and get up allegorical dances; two bands approach, servants of Reason and Passion; their hats, ribbons, and dress are described in full. They quarrel in verse, and their retorts, which follow close on one another, over-refined, keep up a tournament of wit. Who cared for what was natural or possible in this age? There were such festivals at Elizabeth's "progresses"; and you have only to look at the engravings of Sadeler, Martin de Vos, and Goltzius, to find this mixture of sensitive beauties and philosophical enig-

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mas. The Countess of Pembroke and her ladies were delighted to picture this profusion of costumes and verses, this play beneath the trees. They had eyes in the sixteenth century, senses which sought satisfaction in poetry—the same satisfaction as in masquerading and painting. Man was not yet a pure reasoner; abstract truth was not enough for him. Rich stuffs, twisted about and folded; the sun to shine upon them, a large meadow studded with white daisies; ladies in brocaded dresses, with bare arms, crowns on their heads, instruments of music behind the trees—this is what the reader expects; he cares nothing for contrasts; he will readily accept a drawing-room in the midst of the fields.

What are they going to say there? Here comes out that nervous exaltation, in all its folly, which is characteristic of the spirit of the age; love rises to the thirty-sixth heaven. Musidorus is the brother of Céladon; Pamela is closely related to the severe heroines of "Astrée";[6] all the Spanish exaggerations abound and all the Spanish falsehoods. For in these works of fashion or of the Court, primitive sentiment never retains its sincerity: wit, the necessity to please, the desire for effect, of speaking better than others, alter it, influence it, heap up embellishments and refinements, so that nothing is left but twaddle. Musidorus wished to give Pamela a kiss. She repels him. He would have died on the spot; but luckily remembers that his mistress commanded him to leave her, and finds himself still able to obey her command. He complains to the trees, weeps in verse: there are dialogues where Echo, repeating the last word, replies; duets in rhyme, balanced stanzas, in which the theory of love is minutely detailed; in short, all the grand airs of ornamental poetry. If they send a letter to their mistress, they speak to it, tell the ink: "Therfore mourne boldly, my inke; for while shee lookes upon you, your blacknesse will shine: cry out boldly my lamentation; for while shee reades you, your cries will be musicke."[7]

Again, two young princesses are going to bed: "They impoverished their clothes to enrich their bed, which for that night might well scorne the shrine of Venus; and there cherishing one another with deare, though chaste embracements; with sweete,

[6] Céladon, a rustic lover in "Astrée," a French novel in five volumes, named after the heroine, and written by d'Urfé (d. 1625).—Tr.

[7] "Arcadia," ed. fol. 1629, p. 117.

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though cold kisses; it might seeme that love was come to play him there without dart, or that wearie of his owne fires, he was there to refresh himselfe betwen their sweete breathing lippes." [8]

In excuse of these follies, remember that they have their parallels in Shakespeare. Try rather to comprehend them, to imagine them in their place, with their surroundings, such as they are; that is, as the excess of singularity and inventive fire. Even though they mar now and then the finest ideas, yet a natural freshness pierces through the disguise. Take another example: " In the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floore against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty varietie recount their wronge-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep."

In Sidney's second work, " The Defence of Poesie," we meet with genuine imagination, a sincere and serious tone, a grand, commanding style, all the passion and elevation which he carries in his heart and puts into his verse. He is a muser, a Platonist, who is penetrated by the doctrines of the ancients, who takes things from a lofty point of view, who places the excellence of poetry not in pleasing effect, imitation, or rhyme, but in that creative and superior conception by which the artist creates anew and embellishes nature. At the same time, he is an ardent man, trusting in the nobleness of his aspirations and in the width of his ideas, who puts down the brawling of the shoppy, narrow, vulgar Puritanism, and glows with the lofty irony, the proud freedom, of a poet and a lord.

In his eyes, if there is any art or science capable of augmenting and cultivating our generosity, it is poetry. He draws comparison after comparison between it and philosophy or history, whose pretensions he laughs at and dismisses.[9] He fights for poetry as a knight for his lady, and in what heroic and splendid style! He says: " I never heard the old Song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet: and yet it is sung but by some blinde Crowder, with no rougher voyce, than rude stile; which beeing so evill appar-

[8] " Arcadia," ed. fol. 1629, p. 114.

[9] " The Defence of Poesie," ed. fol. 1629, p. 558: " I dare undertake, that Orlando Furioso, or honest King Arthur, will never displease a soldier: but the quidditie of Ens and prima materia, will hardly agree with a Corselet." See also, in the same book, the very lively and spirited personification of History and Philosophy, full of genuine talent.

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elled in the dust and Cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare?" [10]

The philosopher repels, the poet attracts: "Nay hee doth as if your journey should lye through a faire vineyard, at the very first, give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste, you may long to passe further." [11]

What description of poetry can displease you? Not pastoral so easy and genial? "Is it the bitter but wholesome Iambicke, who rubbes the galled minde, making shame the Trumpet of villanie, with bold and open crying out against naughtinesse?" [12]

At the close he reviews his arguments, and the vibrating martial accent of his political period is like a trump of victory: "So that since the excellencies of it (poetry) may bee so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soone trodden downe, it not being an Art of lyes, but of true doctrine: not of effeminatenesse, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished, but honoured by Plato; let us rather plant more Laurels for to ingarland the Poets heads than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers, once to blow upon the cleare springs of Poesie." [13]

From such vehemence and gravity you may anticipate what his verses will be.

Often, after reading the poets of this age, I have looked for some time at the contemporary prints, telling myself that man, in mind and body, was not then such as we see him to-day. We also have our passions, but we are no longer strong enough to bear them. They unsettle us; we are no longer poets without suffering for it. Alfred de Musset, Heine, Edgar Poe, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Cowper, how many shall I instance? Disgust, mental and bodily degradation, disease, impotence, madness, suicide, at best a permanent hallucination or feverish raving—these are nowadays the ordinary issues of the poetic temperament. The passion of the brain gnaws our vitals, dries up the blood, eats into the marrow, shakes us like a tempest, and the human frame, such as civilization has made us, is not substantial

[10] "The Defence of Poesie," ed. fol. 1629, p. 553.
[11] Ibid. p. 550.
[12] Ibid. p. 552.
[13] Ibid. p. 560. Here and there we find also verse as spirited as this:
"Or Pindar's Apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of gold."—P. 568.

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enough long to resist it. They, who have been more roughly trained, who are more inured to the inclemencies of climate, more hardened by bodily exercise, more firm against danger, endure and live. Is there a man living who could withstand the storm of passions and visions which swept over Shakespeare, and end, like him, as a sensible citizen and landed proprietor in his small county? The muscles were firmer, despair less prompt. The rage of concentrated attention, the half hallucinations, the anguish and heaving of the breast, the quivering of the limbs bracing themselves involuntarily and blindly for action, all the painful yearnings which accompany grand desires, exhausted them less; this is why they desired longer, and dared more. D'Aubigné, wounded with many sword-thrusts, conceiving death at hand, had himself bound on his horse that he might see his mistress once more, and rode thus several leagues, losing blood all the way, and arriving in a swoon. Such feelings we glean still from their portraits, in the straight looks which pierce like a sword; in that strength of back, bent or twisted; in the sensuality, energy, enthusiasm, which breathe from their attitude or look. Such feelings we still discover in their poetry, in Greene, Lodge, Jonson, Spenser, Shakespeare, in Sidney, as in all the rest. We quickly forget the faults of taste which accompany them, the affectation, the uncouth jargon. Is it really so uncouth? Imagine a man who with closed eyes distinctly sees the adored countenance of his mistress, who keeps it before him all the day; who is troubled and shaken as he imagines ever and anon her brow, her lips, her eyes; who cannot and will not be separated from his vision; who sinks daily deeper in this passionate contemplation; who is every instant crushed by mortal anxieties, or transported by the raptures of bliss: he will lose the exact conception of objects. A fixed idea becomes a false idea. By dint of regarding an object under all its forms, turning it over, piercing through it, we at last deform it. When we cannot think of a thing without being dazed and without tears, we magnify it, and give it a character which it has not. Hence strange comparisons, over-refined ideas, excessive images, become natural. However far Sidney goes, whatever object he touches, he sees throughout the universe only the name and features of Stella. All ideas bring him back to her. He is drawn ever and invincibly by the same thought: and comparisons which seem far-

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fetched, only express the unfailing presence and sovereign power of the besetting image. Stella is ill; it seems to Sidney that "Joy, which is inseparate from those eyes, Stella, now learnes (strange case) to weepe in thee." [14] To us, the expression is absurd. Is it so for Sidney, who for hours together had dwelt on the expression of those eyes, seeing in them at last all the beauties of heaven and earth, who, compared to them, finds all light dull and all happiness stale? Consider that in every extreme passion ordinary laws are reversed, that our logic cannot pass judgment on it, that we find in it affectation, childishness, witticisms, crudity, folly, and that to us violent conditions of the nervous machine are like an unknown and marvellous land, where common-sense and good language cannot penetrate. On the return of spring, when May spreads over the fields her dappled dress of new flowers, Astrophel and Stella sit in the shade of a retired grove, in the warm air, full of birds' voices and pleasant exhalations. Heaven smiles, the wind kisses the trembling leaves, the inclining trees interlace their sappy branches, amorous earth swallows greedily the rippling water:

"In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton musike made,
May, then yong, his py'd weeds showing,
New perfum'd with flowers fresh growing,

"Astrophel with Stella sweet,
Did for mutuall comfort meet,
Both within themselves oppressed,
But each in the other blessed. . . .

"Their eares hungry of each word,
Which the deere tongue would afford,
But their tongues restrain'd from walking,
Till their hearts had ended talking.

"But when their tongues could not speake,
Love it selfe did silence breake;
Love did set his lips asunder,
Thus to speake in love and wonder. . . .

"This small winde which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kisse,
Each tree in his best attyring,
Sense of love to love inspiring." [15]

[14] "Astrophel and Stella," ed. fol. 1629, 101st sonnet, p. 613.

[15] Ibid. 8th song, p. 603.

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On his knees, with beating heart, oppressed, it seems to him that his mistress becomes transformed:

" Stella, soveraigne of my joy, . . .
Stella, starre of heavenly fire,
Stella, load-starre of desire,
Stella, in whose shining eyes
Are the lights of Cupid's skies. . . .
Stella, whose voice when it speakes
Senses all asunder breakes;
Stella, whose voice when it singeth,
Angels to acquaintance bringeth." [16]

These cries of adoration are like a hymn. Every day he writes thoughts of love which agitate him, and in this long journal of a hundred pages we feel the heated breath swell each moment. A smile from his mistress, a curl lifted by the wind, a gesture—all are events. He paints her in every attitude; he cannot see her too constantly. He talks to the birds, plants, winds, all nature. He brings the whole world to Stella's feet. At the notion of a kiss he swoons:

" Thinke of that most gratefull time,
When thy leaping heart will climbe,
In my lips to have his biding.
There those roses for to kisse,
Which doe breath a sugred blisse,
Opening rubies, pearles dividing." [17]

" O joy, too high for my low stile to show:
O blisse, fit for a nobler state than me:
Envie, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What Oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend, that oft saw through all maskes my wo,
Come, come, and let me powre my selfe on thee;
Gone is the winter of my miserie,
My spring appeares, O see what here doth grow,
For Stella hath with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart giv'n me the monarchie:
I, I, O I may say that she is mine." [18]

There are Oriental splendors in the dazzling sonnet in which he asks why Stella's cheeks have grown pale:

" Where be those Roses gone, which sweetned so our eyes?
Where those red cheekes, with oft with faire encrease doth frame

[16] " Astrophel and Stella " (1629), 8th song, 604.
[17] Ibid. 10th song, p. 610.
[18] Ibid. sonnet 69, p. 555.

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The height of honour in the kindly badge of shame?
Who hath the crimson weeds stolne from my morning skies?" [19]

As he says, his "life melts with too much thinking." Exhausted by ecstasy, he pauses; then he flies from thought to thought, seeking relief for his wound, like the Satyr whom he describes:

"Prometheus, when first from heaven hie
He brought downe fire, ere then on earth not seene,
Fond of delight, a Satyr standing by,
Gave it a kisse, as it like sweet had beene.

"Feeling forthwith the other burning power,
Wood with the smart with showts and shryking shrill,
He sought his ease in river, field, and bower,
But for the time his griefe went with him still." [20]

At last calm returned; and whilst this calm lasts, the lively, glowing spirit plays like a flickering flame on the surface of the deep brooding fire. His love-songs and word-portraits, delightful pagan and chivalric fancies, seem to be inspired by Petrarch or Plato. We feel the charm and sportiveness under the seeming affectation:

"Faire eyes, sweete lips, deare heart, that foolish I
Could hope by Cupids helpe on you to pray;
Since to himselfe he doth your gifts apply,
As his maine force, choise sport, and easefull stray.

"For when he will see who dare him gainsay,
Then with those eyes he lookes, lo by and by
Each soule doth at Loves feet his weapons lay,
Glad if for her he give them leave to die.

"When he will play, then in her lips he is,
Where blushing red, that Loves selfe them doth love,
With either lip he doth the other kisse:
But when he will for quiets sake remove
From all the world, her heart is then his rome,
Where well he knowes, no man to him can come." [21]

Both heart and sense are captive here. If he finds the eyes of Stella more beautiful than anything in the world, he finds her soul more lovely than her body. He is a Platonist when he recounts how Virtue, wishing to be loved of men, took Stella's

[19] "Astrophel and Stella" (1629), sonnet 102, p. 614.
[20] Ibid. p. 525: this sonnet is headed E. D. Wood, in his "Athen. Oxon." i., says it was written by Sir Edward Dyer, Chancellor of the Most noble Order of the Garter.—Tr.
[21] Ibid. sonnet 43, p. 545.

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form to enchant their eyes, and make them see the heaven which the inner sense reveals to heroic souls. We recognize in him that entire submission of heart, love turned into a religion, perfect passion which asks only to grow, and which, like the piety of the mystics, finds itself always too insignificant when it compares itself with the object loved:

> "My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toyes,
> My wit doth strive those passions to defend,
> Which for reward spoyle it with vaine annoyes,
> I see my course to lose my selfe doth bend:
> I see and yet no greater sorrow take,
> Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake." [22]

At last, like Socrates in the banquet, he turns his eyes to deathless beauty, heavenly brightness:

> "Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust,
> And thou my minde aspire to higher things:
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
> Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings. . . .
> O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
> In this small course which birth drawes out to death." [23]

Divine love continues the earthly love; he was imprisoned in this, and frees himself. By this nobility, these lofty aspirations, recognize one of those serious souls of which there are so many in the same climate and race. Spiritual instincts pierce through the dominant paganism, and ere they make Christians, make Platonists.

Section V.—Wherein Lies the Strength of the Poetry of this Period

Sidney was only a soldier in an army; there is a multitude about him, a multitude of poets. In fifty-two years, without counting the drama, two hundred and thirty-three are enumerated,[1] of whom forty have genius or talent: Breton, Donne, Drayton, Lodge, Greene, the two Fletchers, Beaumont, Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Wither, Warner, Davison, Carew, Suckling, Herrick; we should grow tired in counting them. There is a crop of them, and so there is at the same

[22] "Astrophel and Stella" (1629), sonnet 18, p. 573.
[23] Ibid. last sonnet, p. 539.
[1] Nathan Drake, "Shakspeare and his Times," i. Part 2, ch. 2, 3, 4. Among these 233 poets the authors of isolated pieces are not reckoned, but only those who published or collected their works.

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time in Catholic and heroic Spain; and as in Spain it was a sign of the times, the mark of a public want, the index to an extraordinary and transient condition of the mind. What is this condition which gives rise to so universal a taste for poetry? What is it breathes life into their books? How happens it that amongst the least, in spite of pedantries, awkwardnesses, in the rhyming chronicles or descriptive cyclopedias, we meet with brilliant pictures and genuine love-cries? How happens it that when this generation was exhausted, true poetry ended in England, as true painting in Italy and Flanders? It was because an epoch of the mind came and passed away—that, namely, of instinctive and creative conception. These men had new senses, and no theories in their heads. Thus, when they took a walk, their emotions were not the same as ours. What is sunrise to an ordinary man? A white smudge on the edge of the sky, between bosses of clouds, amid pieces of land, and bits of road, which he does not see because he has seen them a hundred times. But for them, all things have a soul; I mean that they feel within themselves, indirectly, the uprising and severance of the outlines, the power and contrast of tints, the sad or delicious sentiment, which breathes from this combination and union like a harmony or a cry. How sorrowful is the sun, as he rises in a mist above the sad sea-furrows; what an air of resignation in the old trees rustling in the night rain; what a feverish tumult in the mass of waves, whose dishevelled locks are twisted forever on the surface of the abyss! But the great torch of heaven, the luminous god, emerges and shines; the tall, soft, pliant herbs, the evergreen meadows, the expanding roof of lofty oaks —the whole English landscape, continually renewed and illumined by the flooding moisture, diffuses an inexhaustible freshness. These meadows, red and white with flowers, ever moist and ever young, slip off their veil of golden mist, and appear suddenly, timidly, like beautiful virgins. Here is the cuckoo-flower, which springs up before the coming of the swallow; there the hare-bell, blue as the veins of a woman; the marigold, which sets with the sun, and, weeping, rises with him. Drayton, in his "Polyolbion," sings

> "Then from her burnisht gate the goodly glittring East
> Guilds every lofty top, which late the humorous Night
> Bespangled had with pearle, to please the Mornings sight;

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On which the mirthfull Quires, with their cleere open throats,
Unto the joyfull Morne so straine their warbling notes,
That Hills and Valleys ring, and even the ecchoing Ayre
Seemes all compos'd of sounds, about them everywhere. . . .
Thus sing away the Morne, untill the mounting Sunne,
Through thick exhaled fogs, his golden head hath runne,
And through the twisted tops of our close Covert creeps,
To kiss the gentle Shade, this while that sweetly sleeps." [2]

A step further, and you will find the old gods reappear. They reappear, these living gods—these living gods mingled with things which you cannot help meeting as soon as you meet nature again. Shakespeare, in the "Tempest," sings:

"Ceres, most bounteous lady thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease;
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to keep;
Thy banks with peonèd and lilied brims,
Which spongy April at thy hest betrims,
To make cold nymphs chaste crowns . . .
Hail, many-colour'd messenger (Iris) . . .
Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flowers
Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers,
And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown
My bosky acres and my unshrubb'd down." [3]

In "Cymbeline" he says:

"They are as gentle as zephyrs, blowing below the violet,
Not wagging his sweet head." [4]

Greene writes:

"When Flora, proud in pomp of all her flowers,
Sat bright and gay,
And gloried in the dew of Iris' showers,
And did display
Her mantle chequered all with gaudy green." [5]

The same author also says:

"How oft have I descending Titan seen,
His burning locks couch in the sea-queen's lap;
And beauteous Thetis his red body wrap
In watery robes, as he her lord had been!" [6]

[2] Drayton's "Polyolbion," ed. 1622, 13th song, p. 214.
[3] Shakespeare's "Tempest," act iv. 1.
[4] Ibid. act iv. 2.
[5] Greene's Poems, ed. Bell, "Eurymachus in Laudem Mirimidæ," p. 73.
[6] Ibid. Melicertus's description of his Mistress, p. 38.

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So Spenser, in his "Faërie Queene," sings:

"The joyous day gan early to appeare;
And fayre Aurora from the deawy bed
Of aged Tithone gan herselfe to reare
With rosy cheekes, for shame as blushing red:
Her golden locks, for hast, were loosely shed
About her eares, when Una her did marke
Clymbe to her charet, all with flowers spred,
From heven high to chace the chearelesse darke;
With mery note her lowd salutes the mounting larke." [1]

All the splendor and sweetness of this moist and well-watered land; all the specialties, the opulence of its dissolving tints, of its variable sky, its luxuriant vegetation, assemble thus about the gods, who gave them their beautiful form.

In the life of every man there are moments when, in presence of objects, he experiences a shock. This mass of ideas, of mangled recollections, of mutilated images, which lie hidden in all corners of his mind, are set in motion, organized, suddenly developed like a flower. He is enraptured; he cannot help looking at and admiring the charming creature which has just appeared; he wishes to see it again, and others like it, and dreams of nothing else. There are such moments in the life of nations, and this is one of them. They are happy in contemplating beautiful things, and wish only that they should be the most beautiful possible. They are not preoccupied, as we are, with theories. They do not excite themselves to express moral or philosophical ideas. They wish to enjoy through the imagination, through the eyes, like those Italian nobles, who, at the same time, were so captivated by fine colors and forms that they covered with paintings not only their rooms and their churches, but the lids of their chests and the saddles of their horses. The rich and green sunny country; young, gayly attired ladies, blooming with health and love; half-draped gods and goddesses, masterpieces and models of strength and grace—these are the most lovely objects which man can contemplate, the most capable of satisfying his senses and his heart—of giving rise to smiles and joy; and these are the objects which occur in all the poets in a most wonderful abundance of songs, pastorals, sonnets, little fugitive pieces, so lively, delicate, easily unfolded, that we have

[1] Spenser's Works, ed. Todd, 1863, "The Faërie Queene," i. c. 11, st. 51.

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never since had their equals. What though Venus and Cupid have lost their altars? Like the contemporary painters of Italy, they willingly imagine a beautiful naked child, drawn on a chariot of gold through the limpid air; or a woman, redolent with youth, standing on the waves, which kiss her snowy feet. Harsh Ben Jonson is ravished with the scene. The disciplined battalion of his sturdy verses changes into a band of little graceful strophes, which trip as lightly as Raphael's children. He sees his lady approach, sitting on the chariot of Love, drawn by swans and doves. Love leads the car; she passes calm and smiling, and all hearts, charmed by her divine looks, wish no other joy than to see and serve her forever.

"See the chariot at hand here of Love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
And well the car Love guideth.
As she goes, all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty;
And, enamoured, do wish, so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.
Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that Love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As Love's star when it riseth! . . .
Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o' the snow,
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!" [8]

What can be more lively, more unlike measured and artificial mythology? Like Theocritus and Moschus, they play with their smiling gods, and their belief becomes a festival. One day, in an alcove of a wood, Cupid meets a nymph asleep:

"Her golden hair o'erspread her face,
Her careless arms abroad were cast,

[8] Ben Jonson's Poems, ed. R. Bell. Celebration of Charis; her Triumph, p. 125.

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Her quiver had her pillow's place,
Her breast lay bare to every blast." [9]

He approaches softly, steals her arrows, and puts his own in their place. She hears a noise at last, raises her reclining head, and sees a shepherd approaching. She flees; he pursues. She bends her bow, and shoots her arrows at him. He only becomes more ardent, and is on the point of seizing her. In despair, she takes an arrow, and buries it in her lovely body. Lo! she is changed, she stops, smiles, loves, draws near him.

"Though mountains meet not, lovers may.
What other lovers do, did they.
The god of Love sat on a tree,
And laught that pleasant sight to see." [10]

A drop of archness falls into the medley of artlessness and voluptuous charm; it was so in Longus, and in all that delicious nosegay called the Anthology. Not the dry mocking of Voltaire, of folks who possessed only wit, and always lived in a drawing-room; but the raillery of artists, lovers whose brain is full of color and form, who, when they recount a bit of roguishness, imagine a stooping neck, lowered eyes, the blushing of vermilion cheeks. One of these fair ones says the following verses, simpering, and we can even see now the pouting of her lips:

"Love in my bosom like a bee
Doth suck his sweet.
Now with his wings he plays with me,
Now with his feet.
Within my eyes he makes his rest,
His bed amid my tender breast,
My kisses are his daily feast.
And yet he robs me of my rest.
Ah! wanton, will ye!" [11]

What relieves these sportive pieces is their splendor of imagination. There are effects and flashes which we hardly dare quote, dazzling and maddening, as in the *Song of Songs:*

"Her eyes, fair eyes, like to the purest lights
That animate the sun, or cheer the day;
In whom the shining sunbeams brightly play,
Whiles fancy doth on them divine delights.

[9] "Cupid's Pastime," unknown author, ab. 1621.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Rosalind's Madrigal."

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"Her cheeks like ripened lilies steeped in wine,
Or fair pomegranate kernels washed in milk,
Or snow-white threads in nets of crimson silk,
Or gorgeous clouds upon the sun's decline.

"Her lips are roses over-washed with dew,
Or like the purple of Narcissus' flower . . .

"Her crystal chin like to the purest mould,
Enchased with dainty daisies soft and white,
Where fancy's fair pavilion once is pight,
Whereas embraced his beauties he doth hold.

"Her neck like to an ivory shining tower,
Where through with azure veins sweet nectar runs,
Or like the down of swans where Senesse woons,
Or like delight that doth itself devour.

"Her paps are like fair apples in the prime,
As round as orient pearls, as soft as down;
They never vail their fair through winter's frown,
But from their sweets love sucked his summer time." [12]

"What need compare, where sweet exceeds compare?
Who draws his thoughts of love from senseless things,
Their pomp and greatest glories doth impair,
And mounts love's heaven with overladen wings." [13]

I can well believe that things had no more beauty then than now; but I am sure that men found them more beautiful.

When the power of embellishment is so great, it is natural that they should paint the sentiment which unites all joys, whither all dreams converge—ideal love, and in particular, artless and happy love. Of all sentiments, there is none for which we have more sympathy. It is of all the most simple and sweet. It is the first motion of the heart, and the first word of nature. It is made up of innocence and self-abandonment. It is clear of reflection and effort. It extricates us from complicated passion, contempt, regret, hate, violent desires. It penetrates us, and we breathe it as the fresh breath of the morning wind, which has swept over flowery meads. The knights of this perilous court inhaled it, and were enraptured, and so rested in the contrast from their actions and their dangers. The most severe and tragic of their poets turned aside to meet it, Shakespeare among

[12] Greene's Poems, ed. R. Bell, Menaphon's Eclogue, p. 41. [13] Ibid., Melicertus's Eclogue, p. 43.

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the evergreen oaks of the forest of Arden,[14] Ben Jonson in the woods of Sherwood,[15] amid the wide shady glades, the shining leaves and moist flowers, trembling on the margin of lonely springs. Marlowe himself, the terrible painter of the agony of Edward II, the impressive and powerful poet, who wrote "Faustus," "Tamerlane" and the "Jew of Malta," leaves his sanguinary dramas, his high-sounding verse, his images of fury, and nothing can be more musical and sweet than his song. A shepherd, to gain his lady-love, says to her:

"Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.
There we will sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.
There will I make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.
A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love. . . .
The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love." [16]

The unpolished gentlemen of the period, returning from hawking, were more than once arrested by such rustic pictures; such as they were, that is to say, imaginative and not very citizen-like, they had dreamed of figuring in them on their own account. But while entering into, they reconstructed them;

[14] "As you Like It."
[15] "The Sad Shepherd." See also Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess."
[16] This poem was, and still is, frequently attributed to Shakespeare. It appears as his in Knight's edition, published a few years ago. Izaak Walton, however, writing about fifty years after Marlowe's death, attributes it to him. In Palgrave's "Golden Treasury," it is also ascribed to the same author. As a confirmation, let us state that Ithamore, in Marlowe's "Jew of Malta," says to the courtesan (Act iv. Sc. 4):
"Thou in those groves, by Dis above,
Shalt live with me, and be my love."
—Tr.

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they reconstructed them in their parks, prepared for Queen Elizabeth's entrance, with a profusion of costumes and devices, not troubling themselves to copy rough nature exactly. Improbability did not disturb them; they were not minute imitators, students of manners: they created; the country for them was but a setting, and the complete picture came from their fancies and their hearts. Romantic it may have been, even impossible, but it was on this account the more charming. Is there a greater charm than putting on one side this actual world which fetters or oppresses us, to float vaguely and easily in the azure and the light, on the summit of the cloud-capped land of fairies, to arrange things according to the pleasure of the moment, no longer feeling the oppressive laws, the harsh and resisting framework of life, adorning and varying everything after the caprice and the refinements of fancy? That is what is done in these little poems. Usually the events are such as happen nowhere, or happen in the land where kings turn shepherds and marry shepherdesses. The beautiful Argentile [17] is detained at the court of her uncle, who wishes to deprive her of her kingdom, and commands her to marry Curan, a boor in his service; she flees, and Curan in despair goes and lives two years among the shepherds. One day he meets a beautiful country-woman, and loves her; gradually, while speaking to her, he thinks of Argentile, and weeps; he describes her sweet face, her lithe figure, her blue-veined delicate wrists, and suddenly sees that the peasant girl is weeping. She falls into his arms, and says, "I am Argentile." Now Curan was a king's son, who had disguised himself thus for love of Argentile. He resumes his armor, and defeats the wicked king. There never was a braver knight; and they both reigned long in Northumberland. From a hundred such tales, tales of the spring-time, the reader will perhaps bear with me while I pick out one more, gay and simple as a May morning. The Princess Dowsabel came down one morning into her father's garden: she gathers honeysuckles, primroses, violets, and daisies; then, behind a hedge, she heard a shepherd singing, and that so finely that she loved him at once. He promises to be faithful, and asks for a kiss. Her cheeks became as crimson as a rose:

[17] Chalmers's "English Poets"; William Warner, "Fourth Book of Albion's England," ch. xx. p. 551.

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"With that she bent her snow white knee,
Down by the shepherd kneeled she,
And him she sweetly kiss'd.
With that the shepherd whoop'd for joy;
Quoth he: 'There's never shepherd's boy
That ever was so blest.'" [18]

Nothing more; is it not enough? It is but a moment's fancy; but they had such fancies every moment. Think what poetry was likely to spring from them, how superior to common events, how free from literal imitation, how smitten with ideal beauty, how capable of creating a world beyond our sad world. In fact, among all these poems there is one truly divine, so divine that the reasoners of succeeding ages have found it wearisome, that even now but few understand it—Spenser's "Faërie Queene."

One day M. Jourdain, having turned Mamamouchi [19] and learned orthography, sent for the most illustrious writers of the age. He settled himself in his arm-chair, pointed with his finger at several folding-stools for them to sit down, and said:

"I have read your little productions, gentlemen. They have afforded me much pleasure. I wish to give you some work to do. I have given some lately to little Lulli,[20] your fellow-laborer. It was at my command that he introduced the sea-shell at his concerts—a melodious instrument, which no one thought of before, and which has such a pleasing effect. I insist that you will work out my ideas as he has worked them out, and I give you an order for a poem in prose. What is not prose, you know, is verse; and what is not verse is prose. When I say, 'Nicolle, bring me my slippers and give me my nightcap,' I speak prose. Take this sentence as your model. This style is much more pleasing than the jargon of unfinished lines which you call verse. As for the subject, let it be myself. You will describe my flowered dressing-gown which I have put on to receive you in, and this little green velvet undress which I wear underneath, to do my morning exercise in. You will set down that this chintz costs a louis an ell. The description, if well worked out, will furnish some very pretty paragraphs, and will enlighten the public as to the cost of things. I desire also that you should speak of my mirrors, my carpets, my hangings. My tradesmen will let you have their bills; don't fail to put them in. I shall be glad to read in your works, all fully and naturally set forth, about my father's shop, who, like a real gentleman, sold cloth to oblige his friends; my maid Nicolle's kitchen, the genteel behavior of Brusquet, the little dog

[18] Chalmers's "English Poets," M. Drayton's "Fourth Eclogue," iv. p. 436.

[19] M. Jourdain is the hero of Molière's comedy, "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," the type of a vulgar and successful upstart; Mamamouchi is a mock title.—Tr.

[20] Lulli, a celebrated Italian composer of the time of Molière.—Tr.

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of my neighbor M. Dimanche. You might also explain my domestic affairs: there is nothing more interesting to the public than to hear how a million may be scraped together. Tell them also that my daughter Lucile has not married that little rascal Cléonte, but M. Samuel Bernard, who made his fortune as a *fermier-général*, keeps his carriage and is going to be a minister of state. For this I will pay you liberally, half a louis for a yard of writing. Come back in a month, and let me see what my ideas have suggested to you."

We are the descendants of M. Jourdain, and this is how we have been talking to the men of genius from the beginning of the century, and the men of genius have listened to us. Hence arise our shoppy and realistic novels. I pray the reader to forget them, to forget himself, to become for a while a poet, a gentleman, a man of the sixteenth century. Unless we bury the M. Jourdain who survives in us, we shall never understand Spenser.

Section VI.—Edmund Spenser

Spenser belonged to an ancient family, allied to great houses; was a friend to Sidney and Raleigh, the two most accomplished knights of the age—a knight himself, at least in heart; who had found in his connections, his friendships, his studies, his life, everything calculated to lead him to ideal poetry. We find him at Cambridge, where he imbues himself with the noblest ancient philosophies; in a northern country, where he passes through a deep and unfortunate passion; at Penshurst, in the castle and in the society where the "Arcadia" was produced; with Sidney, in whom survived entire the romantic poetry and heroic generosity of the feudal spirit; at court, where all the splendors of a disciplined and gorgeous chivalry were gathered about the throne; finally, at Kilcolman, on the borders of a lake, in a lonely castle, from which the view embraced an amphitheatre of mountains, and the half of Ireland. Poor on the other hand,[1] not fit for court, and though favored by the queen, unable to obtain from his patrons anything but inferior employment; in the end, wearied of solicitations, and banished to his dangerous property in Ireland, whence a rebellion expelled him, after his house and child had been burned; he died three months later, of misery

[1] It is very doubtful whether Spenser was so poor as he is generally believed to have been.—Tr.

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and a broken heart.[2] Expectations and rebuffs, many sorrows and many dreams, some few joys, and a sudden and frightful calamity, a small fortune and a premature end; this indeed was a poet's life. But the heart within was the true poet—from it all proceeded; circumstances furnished the subject only; he transformed them more than they him; he received less than he gave. Philosophy and landscapes, ceremonies and ornaments, splendors of the country and the court, on all which he painted or thought, he impressed his inward nobleness. Above all, his was a soul captivated by sublime and chaste beauty, eminently platonic; one of these lofty and refined souls most charming of all, who, born in the lap of nature, draw thence their sustenance, but soar higher, enter the regions of mysticism, and mount instinctively in order to expand on the confines of a loftier world. Spenser leads us to Milton, and thence to Puritanism, as Plato to Vergil, and thence to Christianity. Sensuous beauty is perfect in both, but their main worship is for moral beauty. He appeals to the Muses:

> "Revele to me the sacred noursery
> Of vertue, which with you doth there remaine,
> Where it in silver bowre does hidden ly
> From view of men and wicked worlds disdaine!"

He encourages his knight when he sees him droop. He is wroth when he sees him attacked. He rejoices in his justice, temperance, courtesy. He introduces in the beginning of a song, long stanzas in honor of friendship and justice. He pauses, after relating a lovely instance of chastity, to exhort women to modesty. He pours out the wealth of his respect and tenderness at the feet of his heroines. If any coarse man insults them, he calls to their aid nature and the gods. Never does he bring them on his stage without adorning their name with splendid eulogy. He has an adoration for beauty worthy of Dante and Plotinus. And this, because he never considers it a mere harmony of color and form, but an emanation of unique, heavenly, imperishable beauty, which no mortal eye can see, and which is the masterpiece of the great Author of the worlds.[3] Bodies only render it visible;

[2] "He died for want of bread, in King Street." Ben Jonson, quoted by Drummond.

[3] "Hymns of Love and Beauty"; Of Heavenly Love and Beauty.

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it does not live in them; charm and attraction are not in things, but in the immortal idea which shines through them:

> " For that same goodly hew of white and red,
> With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shall decay,
> And those sweete rosy leaves, so fairly spred
> Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away
> To that they were, even to corrupted clay:
> That golden wyre, those sparckling stars so bright,
> Shall turne to dust, and lose their goodly light.
> But that faire lampe, from whose celestiall ray
> That light proceedes, which kindleth lovers fire,
> Shall never be extinguisht nor decay;
> But, when the vitall spirits doe expyre,
> Upon her native planet shall retyre;
> For it is heavenly borne, and cannot die,
> Being a parcell of the purest skie." [4]

In presence of this ideal of beauty, love is transformed:

> " For Love is lord of Truth and Loialtie,
> Lifting himself out of the lowly dust,
> On golden plumes up to the purest skie,
> Above the reach of loathly sinfull lust,
> Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
> Of his weake wings dare not to heaven fly,
> But like a moldwarpe in the earth doth ly." [5]

Love such as this contains all that is good, and fine, and noble. It is the prime source of life, and the eternal soul of things. It is this love which, pacifying the primitive discord, has created the harmony of the spheres, and maintains this glorious universe. It dwells in God, and is God himself, come down in bodily form to regenerate the tottering world and save the human race; around and within animated beings, when our eyes can pierce outward appearances, we behold it as a living light, penetrating and embracing every creature. We touch here the sublime sharp summit where the world of mind and the world of sense unite; where man, gathering with both hands the loveliest flowers of either, feels himself at the same time a pagan and a Christian.

So much, as a testimony to his heart. But he was also a poet, that is, pre-eminently a creator and a dreamer, and that most naturally, instinctively, unceasingly. We might go on forever describing this inward condition of all great artists; there would

[4] " A Hymne in Honour of Beautie," lines 92-105.

[5] " A Hymne in Honour of Love," lines 176-182.

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still remain much to be described. It is a sort of mental growth with them; at every instant a bud shoots forth, and on this another and still another; each producing, increasing, blooming of itself, so that after a few moments we find first a green plant crop up, then a thicket, then a forest. A character appears to them, then an action, then a landscape, then a succession of actions, characters, landscapes, producing, completing, arranging themselves by instinctive development, as when in a dream we behold a train of figures which, without any outward compulsion, display and group themselves before our eyes. This fount of living and changing forms is inexhaustible in Spenser; he is always imaging; it is his specialty. He has but to close his eyes, and apparitions arise; they abound in him, crowd, overflow; in vain he pours them forth; they continually float up, more copious and more dense. Many times, following the inexhaustible stream, I have thought of the vapors which rise incessantly from the sea, ascend, sparkle, commingle their golden and snowy scrolls, while underneath them new mists arise, and others again beneath, and the splendid procession never grows dim or ceases.

But what distinguishes him from all others is the mode of his imagination. Generally with a poet his mind ferments vehemently and by fits and starts; his ideas gather, jostle each other, suddenly appear in masses and heaps, and burst forth in sharp, piercing, concentrative words; it seems that they need these sudden accumulations to imitate the unity and life-like energy of the objects which they reproduce; at least almost all the poets of that time, Shakespeare at their head, act thus. Spenser remains calm in the fervor of invention. The visions which would be fever to another, leave him at peace. They come and unfold themselves before him, easily, entire, uninterrupted, without starts. He is epic, that is, a narrator, not a singer like an ode-writer, nor a mimic like a play-writer. No modern is more like Homer. Like Homer and the great epic-writers, he only presents consecutive and noble, almost classical images, so nearly ideas, that the mind seizes them unaided and unawares. Like Homer, he is always simple and clear: he makes no leaps, he omits no argument, he robs no word of its primitive and ordinary meaning, he preserves the natural sequence of ideas. Like Homer, again, he is redundant, ingenuous, even childish. He says everything, he puts down reflections which we have made

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beforehand; he repeats without limit his grand ornamental epithets. We can see that he beholds objects in a beautiful uniform light, with infinite detail; that he wishes to show all this detail, never fearing to see his happy dream change or disappear; that he traces its outline with a regular movement, never hurrying or slackening. He is even a little prolix, too unmindful of the public, too ready to lose himself and dream about the things he beholds. His thought expands in vast repeated comparisons, like those of the old Ionic poet. If a wounded giant falls, he finds him

> "As an aged tree,
> High growing on the top of rocky clift,
> Whose hart-strings with keene steele nigh hewen be,
> The mightie trunck halfe rent with ragged rift,
> Doth roll adowne the rocks, and fall with fearefull drift.
>
> "Or as a castle, reared high and round,
> By subtile engins and malitious slight
> Is undermined from the lowest ground,
> And her foundation forst, and feebled quight,
> At last downe falles; and with her heaped hight
> Her hastie ruine does more heavie make,
> And yields it selfe unto the victours might:
> Such was this Gyaunt's fall, that seemd to shake
> The stedfast globe of earth, as it for feare did quake." [6]

He develops all the ideas which he handles. All his phrases become periods. Instead of compressing, he expands. To bear this ample thought and its accompanying train, he requires a long stanza, ever renewed, long alternate verses, reiterated rhymes, whose uniformity and fullness recall the majestic sounds which undulate eternally through the woods and the fields. To unfold these epic faculties, and to display them in the sublime region where his soul is naturally borne, he requires an ideal stage, situated beyond the bounds of reality, with personages who could hardly exist, and in a world which could never be.

He made many miscellaneous attempts in sonnets, elegies, pastorals, hymns of love, little sparkling word-pictures; [7] they were but essays, incapable for the most part of supporting his genius. Yet already his magnificent imagination appeared in them; gods, men, landscapes, the world which he sets in motion

[6] "The Faërie Queene," i. c. 8, stanzas 22, 23.

[7] "The Shepherd's Calendar," "Amoretti," "Sonnets," "Prothalamion," "Epithalamion," "Muiopotmos," "Vergil's Gnat," "The Ruines of Time," "The Teares of the Muses," etc.

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is a thousand miles from that in which we live. His "Shepherd's Calendar"[8] is a thought-inspiring and tender pastoral, full of delicate loves, noble sorrows, lofty ideas, where no voice is heard but of thinkers and poets. His "Visions of Petrarch and Du Bellay" are admirable dreams, in which palaces, temples of gold, splendid landscapes, sparkling rivers, marvellous birds, appear in close succession as in an Oriental fairy-tale. If he sings a "Prothalamion," he sees two beautiful swans, white as snow, who come softly swimming down amidst the songs of nymphs and vermeil roses, while the transparent water kisses their silken feathers, and murmurs with joy:

"There, in a meadow, by the river's side,
A flocke of Nymphes I chaunced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the Flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untyde,
As each had bene a bryde;
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs, entrayled curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,
And with fine fingers cropt full feateously
The tender stalkes on hye.
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some; the violet, pallid blew,
The little dazie, that at evening closes,
The virgin lillie, and the primrose trew,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroomes posies
Against the brydale-day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

"With that I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe
Come softly swimming downe along the lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see;
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew . . .
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seem'd foule to them, and bad his billowes spare
To wet their silken feathers, least they might
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre,
And marre their beauties bright,
That shone as heavens light,
Against their brydale day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song!"[9]

[8] Published in 1589; dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney.

[9] "Prothalamion," lines 19-54.

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If he bewails the death of Sidney, Sidney becomes a shepherd, he is slain like Adonis; around him gather weeping nymphs:

> " The gods, which all things see, this same beheld,
> And, pittying this paire of lovers trew,
> Transformed them there lying on the field,
> Into one flowre that is both red and blew:
> It first growes red, and then to blew doth fade,
> Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.
>
> " And in the midst thereof a star appeares,
> As fairly formd as any star in skyes:
> Resembling Stella in her freshest yeares,
> Forth darting beames of beautie from her eyes;
> And all the day it standeth full of deow,
> Which is the teares, that from her eyes did flow." [10]

His most genuine sentiments become thus fairy-like. Magic is the mould of his mind, and impresses its shape on all that he imagines or thinks. Involuntarily he robs objects of their ordinary form. If he looks at a landscape, after an instant he sees it quite differently. He carries it, unconsciously, into an enchanted land; the azure heaven sparkles like a canopy of diamonds, meadows are clothed with flowers, a biped population flutters in the balmy air, palaces of jasper shine among the trees, radiant ladies appear on carved balconies above galleries of emerald. This unconscious toil of mind is like the slow crystallizations of nature. A moist twig is cast into the bottom of a mine, and is brought out again a hoop of diamonds.

At last he finds a subject which suits him, the greatest joy permitted to an artist. He removes his epic from the common ground which, in the hands of Homer and Dante, gave expression to a living creed, and depicted national heroes. He leads us to the summit of fairy-land, soaring above history, on that extreme verge where objects vanish and pure idealism begins: " I have undertaken a work," he says, " to represent all the moral virtues, assigning to every virtue a knight to be the patron and defender of the same; in whose actions and feats of armes and chivalry the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten downe and overcome." [11] In fact he gives us an allegory as the founda-

[10] " Astrophel and Stella," lines 181-192.

[11] Words attributed to him by Lodowick Bryskett, " Discourse of Civil Life," ed. 1606, p. 26.

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tion of his poem, not that he dreams of becoming a wit, a preacher of moralities, a propounder of riddles. He does not subordinate image to idea; he is a seer, not a philosopher. They are living men and actions which he sets in motion; only from time to time, in his poem, enchanted palaces, a whole train of splendid visions trembles and divides like a mist, enabling us to catch a glimpse of the thought which raised and arranged it. When in his Garden of Adonis we see the countless forms of all living things arranged in due order, in close compass, awaiting life, we conceive with him the birth of universal love, the ceaseless fertility of the great mother, the mysterious swarm of creatures which rise in succession from her "wide wombe of the world." When we see his Knight of the Cross combating with a horrible woman-serpent in defence of his beloved lady Una, we dimly remember that, if we search beyond these two figures, we shall find behind one, Truth, behind the other, Falsehood. We perceive that his characters are not flesh and blood, and that all these brilliant phantoms are phantoms, and nothing more. We take pleasure in their brilliancy, without believing in their substantiality; we are interested in their doings, without troubling ourselves about their misfortunes. We know that their tears and cries are not real. Our emotion is purified and raised. We do not fall into gross illusion; we have that gentle feeling of knowing ourselves to be dreaming. We, like him, are a thousand leagues from actual life, beyond the pangs of painful pity, unmixed terror, violent and bitter hatred. We entertain only refined sentiments, partly formed, arrested at the very moment they were about to affect us with too sharp a stroke. They slightly touch us, and we find ourselves happy in being extricated from a belief which was beginning to be oppressive.

Section VII.—Spenser in His Relation to the Renaissance

What world could furnish materials to so elevated a fancy? One only, that of chivalry; for none is so far from the actual. Alone and independent in his castle, freed from all the ties which society, family, toil, usually impose on the actions of men, the feudal hero had attempted every kind of adventure, but yet he had done less than he imagined; the boldness of his deeds had

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been exceeded by the madness of his dreams. For want of useful employment and an accepted rule, his brain had labored on an unreasoning and impossible track, and the urgency of his wearisomeness had increased beyond measure his craving for excitement. Under this stimulus his poetry had become a world of imagery. Insensibly strange conceptions had grown and multiplied in his brains, one over the other, like ivy woven round a tree, and the original trunk had disappeared beneath their rank growth and their obstruction. The delicate fancies of the old Welsh poetry, the grand ruins of the German epics, the marvellous splendors of the conquered East, all the recollections which four centuries of adventure had scattered among the minds of men, had become gathered into one great dream; and giants, dwarfs, monsters, the whole medley of imaginary creatures, of superhuman exploits and splendid follies, were grouped around a unique conception, exalted and sublime love, like courtiers prostrated at the feet of their king. It was an ample and buoyant subject-matter, from which the great artists of the age, Ariosto, Tasso, Cervantes, Rabelais, had hewn their poems. But they belonged too completely to their own time, to admit of their belonging to one which had passed.[1] They created a chivalry afresh, but it was not genuine. The ingenious Ariosto, an ironical epicurean, delights his gaze with it, and grows merry over it, like a man of pleasure, a sceptic who rejoices doubly in his pleasure because it is sweet, and because it is forbidden. By his side poor Tasso, inspired by a fanatical, revived, factitious Catholicism, amid the tinsel of an old school of poetry, works on the same subject, in sickly fashion, with great effort and scant success. Cervantes, himself a knight, albeit he loves chivalry for its nobleness, perceives its folly, and crushes it to the ground, with heavy blows, in the mishaps of the wayside inns. More coarsely, more openly, Rabelais, a rude commoner, drowns it with a burst of laughter, in his merriment and nastiness. Spenser alone takes it seriously and naturally. He is on the level of so much nobleness, dignity, reverie. He is not yet settled and shut in by that species of exact commonsense which was to found and cramp the whole modern civilization. In his heart he inhabits the poetic and shadowy land from

[1] Ariosto, 1474-1533. Tasso, 1544-1595. Cervantes, 1547-1616. Rabelais, 1483-1553.

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which men were daily drawing farther and farther away. He is enamored of it, even to its very language; he revives the old words, the expressions of the Middle Ages, the style of Chaucer, especially in the "Shepherd's Calendar." He enters straightway upon the strangest dreams of the old story-tellers, without astonishment, like a man who has still stranger dreams of his own. Enchanted castles, monsters and giants, duels in the woods, wandering ladies, all spring up under his hands, the mediæval fancy with the mediæval generosity; and it is just because this world is unreal that it so suits his humor.

Is there in chivalry sufficient to furnish him with matter? That is but one world, and he has another. Beyond the valiant men, the glorified images of moral virtues, he has the gods, finished models of sensible beauty; beyond Christian chivalry he has the pagan Olympus; beyond the idea of heroic will which can only be satisfied by adventures and danger, there exists calm energy, which, by its own impulse, is in harmony with actual existence. For such a poet one ideal is not enough; beside the beauty of effort he places the beauty of happiness; he couples them, not deliberately as a philosopher, nor with the design of a scholar like Goethe, but because they are both lovely; and here and there, amid armor and passages of arms, he distributes satyrs, nymphs, Diana, Venus, like Greek statues amid the turrets and lofty trees of an English park. There is nothing forced in the union; the ideal epic, like a superior heaven, receives and harmonizes the two worlds; a beautiful pagan dream carries on a beautiful dream of chivalry; the link consists in the fact that they are both beautiful. At this elevation the poet has ceased to observe the differences of races and civilizations. He can introduce into his picture whatever he will; his only reason is, "That suited"; and there could be no better. Under the glossy-leaved oaks, by the old trunk so deeply rooted in the ground, he can see two knights cleaving each other, and the next instant a company of Fauns who came there to dance. The beams of light which have poured down upon the velvet moss, the green turf of an English forest, can reveal the dishevelled locks and white shoulders of nymphs. Do we not see it in Rubens? And what signify discrepancies in the happy and sublime illusion of fancy? Are there more discrepancies? Who perceives them, who feels them? Who does not feel, on the contrary, that

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to speak the truth, there is but one world, that of Plato and the poets; that actual phenomena are but outlines—mutilated, incomplete and blurred outlines—wretched abortions scattered here and there on Time's track, like fragments of clay, half moulded, then cast aside, lying in an artist's studio; that, after all, invisible forces and ideas, which forever renew the actual existences, attain their fulfilment only in imaginary existences; and that the poet, in order to express nature in its entirety, is obliged to embrace in his sympathy all the ideal forms by which nature reveals itself? This is the greatness of his work; he has succeeded in seizing beauty in its fulness, because he cared for nothing but beauty.

The reader will feel that it is impossible to give in full the plot of such a poem. In fact, there are six poems, each of a dozen cantos, in which the action is ever diverging and converging again, becoming confused and starting again; and all the imaginings of antiquity and of the Middle Ages are, I believe, combined in it. The knight "pricks along the plaine," among the trees, and at a crossing of the paths meets other knights with whom he engages in combat; suddenly from within a cave appears a monster, half woman and half serpent, surrounded by a hideous offspring; further on a giant, with three bodies; then a dragon, great as a hill, with sharp talons and vast wings. For three days he fights them, and twice overthrown, he comes to himself only by aid of "a gracious ointment." After that there are savage tribes to be conquered, castles surrounded by flames to be taken. Meanwhile ladies are wandering in the midst of forests, on white palfreys, exposed to the assaults of miscreants, now guarded by a lion which follows them, now delivered by a band of satyrs who adore them. Magicians work manifold charms; palaces display their festivities; tilt-yards provide endless tournaments; sea-gods, nymphs, fairies, kings, intermingle in these feasts, surprises, dangers.

You will say it is a phantasmagoria. What matter, if we see it? And we do see it, for Spenser does. His sincerity communicates itself to us. He is so much at home in this world that we end by finding ourselves at home in it too. He shows no appearance of astonishment at astonishing events; he comes upon them so naturally that he makes them natural; he defeats the miscreants, as if he had done nothing else all his life.

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Venus, Diana, and the old deities, dwell at his gate and enter his threshold without his taking any heed of them. His serenity becomes ours. We grow credulous and happy by contagion, and to the same extent as he. How could it be otherwise? Is it possible to refuse credence to a man who paints things for us with such accurate details and in such lively colors? Here with a dash of his pen he describes a forest for you; and are you not instantly in it with him? Beech trees with their silvery stems, "loftie trees iclad with sommers pride, did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide"; rays of light tremble on the bark and shine on the ground, on the reddening ferns and low bushes, which, suddenly smitten with the luminous track, glisten and glimmer. Footsteps are scarcely heard on the thick beds of heaped leaves; and at distant intervals, on the tall herbage, drops of dew are sparkling. Yet the sound of a horn reaches us through the foliage; how sweetly yet cheerfully it falls on the ear, amidst this vast silence! It resounds more loudly; the clatter of a hunt draws near; "eft through the thicke they heard one rudely rush;" a nymph approaches, the most chaste and beautiful in the world. Spenser sees her; nay more, he kneels before her:

"Her face so faire, as flesh it seemed not,
But hevenly pourtraict of bright angels hew,
Cleare as the skye, withouten blame or blot,
Through goodly mixture of complexions dew;
And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
The which ambrosiall odours from them threw,
And gazers sence with double pleasure fed,
Hable to heale the sicke and to revive the ded.

"In her faire eyes two living lamps did flame,
Kindled above at th' Hevenly Makers light,
And darted fyrie beames out of the same;
So passing persant, and so wondrous bright,
That quite bereav'd the rash beholders sight:
In them the blinded god his lustfull fyre
To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
For, with dredd maiestie and awfull yre,
She broke his wanton darts, and quenched bace desyre.

"Her yvorie forhead, full of bountie brave,
Like a broad table did itselfe dispred,

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For Love his loftie triumphes to engrave,
And write the battailes of his great godhed:
All good and honour might therein be red;
For there their dwelling was. And, when she spake
Sweete wordes, like dropping honny, she did shed;
And 'twixt the perles and rubins softly brake
A silver sound, that heavenly musicke seemd to make.

"Upon her eyelids many Graces sate,
Under the shadow of her even browes,
Working belgardes and amorous retrate;
And everie one her with a grace endowes,
And everie one with meekenesse to her bowes:
So glorious mirrhour of celestiall grace,
And soveraine moniment of mortall vowes,
How shall frayle pen descrive her heavenly face,
For feare, through want of skill, her beauty to disgrace.

"So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire,
She seemd, when she presented was to sight;
And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
All in a silken Camus lilly whight,
Purfled upon with many a folded plight,
Which all above besprinckled was throughout
With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
Like twinckling starres; and all the skirt about
Was hemd with golden fringe.

"Below her ham her weed did somewhat trayne,
And her streight legs most bravely were embayld
In gilden buskins of costly cordwayne,
All bard with golden bendes, which were entayld
With curious antickes, and full fayre aumayld.
Before, they fastned were under her knee
In a rich iewell, and therein entrayld
The ends of all the knots, that none might see
How they within their fouldings close enwrapped bee.

"Like two faire marble pillours they were seene,
Which doe the temple of the gods support,
Whom all the people decke with girlands greene,
And honour in their festivall resort;
Those same with stately grace and princely port
She taught to tread, when she herselfe would grace;
But with the woody nymphes when she did play,
Or when the flying libbard she did chace,
She could them nimbly move, and after fly apace.

"And in her hand a sharpe bore-speare she held,
And at her backe a bow and quiver gay,

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Stuft with steel-headed dartes wherewith she queld
The salvage beastes in her victorious play,
Knit with a golden bauldricke which forelay
Athwart her snowy brest, and did divide
Her daintie paps; which, like young fruit in May,
Now little gan to swell, and being tide
Through her thin weed their places only signifide.

"Her yellow lockes, crisped like golden wyre,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the winde emongst them did inspyre,
They waved like a penon wyde dispred
And low behinde her backe were scattered:
And, whether art it were or heedlesse hap,
As through the flouring forrest rash she fled,
In her rude heares sweet flowres themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap." [2]

"The daintie rose, the daughter of her morne,
More deare than life she tendered, whose flowre
The girlond of her honour did adorne;
Ne suffered she the middayes scorching powre.
Ne the sharp northerne wind thereon to showre;
But lapped up her silken leaves most chayre,
Whenso the froward skye began to lowre;
But, soone as calmed was the cristall ayre,
She did it fayre dispred, and let to flourish fayre." [3]

He is on his knees before her, I repeat, as a child on Corpus Christi day, among flowers and perfumes, transported with admiration, so that he sees a heavenly light in her eyes, and angel's tints on her cheeks, even impressing into her service Christian angels and pagan graces to adorn and await upon her; it is love which brings such visions before him:

"Sweet love, that doth his golden wings embay
In blessed nectar and pure pleasures wall."

Whence this perfect beauty, this modest and charming dawn, in which he assembles all the brightness, all the sweetness, all the virgin graces of the full morning? What mother begat her, what marvellous birth brought to light such a wonder of grace and purity? One day, in a sparkling, solitary fountain, where the sunbeams shone, Chrysogone was bathing with roses and violets.

[2] "The Faërie Queene," ii. c. 3, stanzas 22-30. [3] Ibid. iii. c. 5, stanza 51.

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"It was upon a sommers shinie day,
When Titan faire his beamēs did display,
In a fresh fountaine, far from all mens vew,
She bath'd her brest the boyling heat t' allay;
She bath'd with roses red and violets blew,
And all the sweetest flowers that in the forrest grew.
Till faint through yrkesome wearines adowne
Upon the grassy ground herselfe she layd
To sleepe, the whiles a gentle slombring swowne
Upon her fell all naked bare displayd." [4]

The beams played upon her body, and "fructified" her. The months rolled on. Troubled and ashamed, she went into the "wildernesse," and sat down, "every sence with sorrow sore opprest." Meanwhile Venus, searching for her boy Cupid, who had mutinied and fled from her, "wandered in the world." She had sought him in courts, cities, cottages, promising "kisses sweet, and sweeter things, unto the man that of him tydings to her brings."

"Shortly unto the wastefull woods she came,
Whereas she found the goddesse (Diana) with her crew,
After late chace of their embrewed game,
Sitting beside a fountaine in a rew;
Some of them washing with the liquid dew
From off their dainty limbs the dusty sweat
And soyle, which did deforme their lively hew;
Others lay shaded from the scorching heat,
The rest upon her person gave attendance great.
She, having hong upon a bough on high
Her bow and painted quiver, had unlaste
Her silver buskins from her nimble thigh,
And her lanck loynes ungirt, and brests unbraste,
After her heat the breathing cold to taste;
Her golden lockes, that late in tresses bright
Embreaded were for hindring of her haste,
Now loose about her shoulders hong undight,
And were with sweet Ambrosia all besprinckled light." [5]

Diana, surprised thus, repulses Venus, "and gan to smile, in scorne of her vaine playnt," swearing that if she should catch Cupid, she would clip his wanton wings. Then she took pity on the afflicted goddess, and set herself with her to look for the fugitive. They came to the "shady covert" where Chrysog-

[4] "The Faërie Queene," iii. c. 6, stanzas 6 and 7.

[5] Ibid. stanzas 17 and 18.

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one, in her sleep, had given birth "unawares" to two lovely girls, "as faire as springing day." Diana took one, and made her the purest of all virgins. Venus carried off the other to the Garden of Adonis, "the first seminary of all things, that are borne to live and dye"; where Psyche, the bride of Love, disports herself; where Pleasure, their daughter, wantons with the Graces; where Adonis, "lapped in flowres and pretious spycery," "liveth in eternal bliss," and came back to life through the breath of immortal Love. She brought her up as her daughter, selected her to be the most faithful of loves, and after long trials, gave her hand to the good knight Sir Scudamore.

That is the kind of thing we meet with in the wondrous forest. Are you ill at ease there, and do you wish to leave it because it is wondrous? At every bend in the alley, at every change of the light, a stanza, a word, reveals a landscape or an apparition. It is morning, the white dawn gleams faintly through the trees; bluish vapors veil the horizon, and vanish in the smiling air; the springs tremble and murmur faintly amongst the mosses, and on high the poplar leaves begin to stir and flutter like the wings of butterflies. A knight alights from his horse, a valiant knight, who has unhorsed many a Saracen, and experienced many an adventure. He unlaces his helmet, and on a sudden you perceive the cheeks of a young girl:

> "Which doft, her golden lockes, that were upbound
> Still in a knot, unto her heeles downe traced,
> And like a silken veile in compasse round
> About her backe and all her bodie wound;
> Like as the shining skie in summers night,
> What time the dayes with scorching heat abound,
> Is creasted all with lines of firie light,
> That it prodigious seemes in common peoples sight." [6]

It is Britomart, a virgin and a heroine, like Clorinda or Marfisa,[7] but how much more ideal! The deep sentiment of nature, the sincerity of reverie, the ever-flowing fertility of inspiration, the German seriousness, reanimate in this poem classical or chivalrous conceptions, even when they are the oldest or the most trite. The train of splendors and of scenery never ends. Des-

[6] "The Faërie Queene," iv. c. 1, stanza 13.

[7] Clorinda, the heroine of the infidel army in Tasso's epic poem, "Jerusalem Delivered"; Marfisa, an Indian Queen, who figures in Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso," and also, in Boyardo's "Orlando Innamorato."—Tr.

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olate promontories, cleft with gaping chasms; thunder-stricken and blackened masses of rocks, against which the hoarse breakers dash; palaces sparkling with gold, wherein ladies, beauteous as angels, reclining carelessly on purple cushions, listen with sweet smiles to the harmony of music played by unseen hands; lofty silent walks, where avenues of oaks spread their motionless shadows over clusters of virgin violets, and turf which never mortal foot has trod; to all these beauties of art and nature he adds the marvels of mythology, and describes them with as much of love and sincerity as a painter of the Renaissance or an ancient poet. Here approach on chariots of shell, Cymoënt and her nymphs:

"A teme of dolphins raunged in aray
Drew the smooth charett of sad Cymoënt;
They were all taught by Triton to obay
To the long raynes at her commaundëment:
As swifte as swallowes on the waves they went,
That their brode flaggy finnes no fome did reare,
Ne bubling rowndell they behinde them sent;
The rest, of other fishes drawen weare;
Which with their finny oars the swelling sea did sheare." [8]

Nothing, again, can be sweeter or calmer than the description of the palace of Morpheus:

"He, making speedy way through spersed ayre,
And through the world of waters wide and deepe,
To Morpheus house doth hastily repaire.
Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,
And low, where dawning day doth never peepe
His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe
In silver deaw his ever-drouping hed,
Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spred.
And, more to lulle him in his slumber soft,
A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe
And ever-drizzling raine upon the loft.
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne.
No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
As still are wont t' annoy the walled towne,
Might there be heard: but careless Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enimyes."

[8] "The Faërie Queene," iii. c. 4, stanza 33.

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Observe also in a corner of this forest, a band of satyrs dancing under the green leaves. They come leaping like wanton kids, as gay as birds of joyous spring. The fair Hellenore, whom they have chosen for "May-lady," "daunst lively" also, laughing, and "with girlonds all bespredd." The wood re-echoes the sound of their "merry pypes." "Their horned feet the greene gras wore." "All day they daunced with great lustyhedd," with sudden motions and alluring looks, while about them their flock feed on "the brouzes" at their pleasure. In every book we see strange processions pass by, allegorical and picturesque shows, like those which were then displayed at the courts of princes; now a masquerade of Cupid, now of the Rivers, now of the Months, now of the Vices. Imagination was never more prodigal or inventive. Proud Lucifera advances in a chariot "adorned all with gold and girlonds gay," beaming like the dawn, surrounded by a crowd of courtiers whom she dazzles with her glory and splendor: "six unequall beasts" draw her along, and each of these is ridden by a Vice. Idleness "upon a slouthfull asse . . . in habit blacke . . . like to an holy monck," sick for very laziness, lets his heavy head droop, and holds in his hand a breviary which he does not read; Gluttony, on "a filthie swyne," crawls by in his deformity, "his belly . . . upblowne with luxury, and eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne; and like a crane his necke was long and fyne," dressed in vine-leaves, through which one can see his body eaten by ulcers, and vomiting along the road the wine and flesh with which he is glutted. Avarice seated between "two iron coffers," "upon a camell loaden all with gold," is handling a heap of coin, with threadbare coat, hollow cheeks, and feet stiff with gout. Envy "upon a ravenous wolfe still did chaw between his cankred teeth a venemous tode, that all the poison ran about his chaw," and his discolored garment "ypainted full of eies," conceals a snake wound about his body. Wrath, covered with a torn and bloody robe, comes riding on a lion, brandishing about his head "a burning brond," his eyes sparkling, his face pale as ashes, grasping in his feverish hand the haft of his dagger. The strange and terrible procession passes on, led by the solemn harmony of the stanzas; and the grand music of oft-repeated rhymes sustains the imagination in this fantastic world, which, with its mingled horrors and splendors, has just been opened to its flight.

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Yet all this is little. However much mythology and chivalry can supply, they do not suffice for the needs of this poetical fancy. Spenser's characteristic is the vastness and overflow of his picturesque invention. Like Rubens, whatever he creates is beyond the region of all traditions, but complete in all parts, and expresses distinct ideas. As with Rubens, his allegory swells its proportions beyond all rule, and withdraws fancy from all law, except in so far as it is necessary to harmonize forms and colors. For, if ordinary minds receive from allegory a certain weight which oppresses them, lofty imaginations receive from it wings which carry them aloft. Freed by it from the common conditions of life, they can dare all things, beyond imitation, apart from probability, with no other guides but their inborn energy and their shadowy instincts. For three days Sir Guyon is led by the cursed spirit, the tempter Mammon, in the subterranean realm, across wonderful gardens, trees laden with golden fruits, glittering palaces, and a confusion of all worldly treasures. They have descended into the bowels of the earth, and pass through caverns, unknown abysses, silent depths. "An ugly Feend . . . with monstrous stalke behind him stept," without Guyon's knowledge, ready to devour him on the least show of covetousness. The brilliancy of the gold lights up hideous figures, and the beaming metal shines with a beauty more seductive in the gloom of the infernal prison.

"That Houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,
From whose rough vaut the ragged breaches hong
Embost with massy gold of glorious guifte,
And with rich metall loaded every rifte,
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threatt;
And over them Arachne high did lifte
Her cunning web, and spred her subtile nett,
Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black than iett.

"Both roofe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,
And hid in darknes, that none could behold
The hew thereof; for vew of cheerfull day
Did never in that House itselfe display,
But a faint shadow of uncertein light;
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away;
Or as the moone, cloathed with clowdy night,
Does show to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

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"In all that rowme was nothing to be seene
But huge great yron chests and coffers strong,
All bard with double bends, that none could weene
Them to enforce by violence or wrong;
On every side they placed were along.
But all the grownd with sculs was scattered
And dead mens bones, which round about were flong;
Whose lives, it seemed, whilome there were shed,
And their vile carcases now left unburied. . . .

"Thence, forward he him ledd and shortly brought
Unto another rowme, whose dore forthright
To him did open as it had beene taught:
Therein an hundred raunges weren pight,
And hundred fournaces all burning bright;
By every fournace many Feends did byde,
Deformed creatures, horrible in sight;
And every Feend his busie paines applyde
To melt the golden metall, ready to be tryde.

"One with great bellowes gathered filling ayre,
And with forst wind the fewell did inflame;
Another did the dying bronds repayre
With yron tongs, and sprinckled ofte the same
With liquid waves, fiers Vulcans rage to tame,
Who, maystring them, renewd his former heat:
Some scumd the drosse that from the metall came;
Some stird the molten owre with ladles great:
And every one did swincke, and every one did sweat. . . .

"He brought him, through a darksom narrow strayt,
To a broad gate all built of beaten gold:
The gate was open; but therein did wayt
A sturdie Villein, stryding stiffe and bold,
As if the Highest God defy he would:
In his right hand an yron club he held,
But he himselfe was all of golden mould,
Yet had both life and sence, and well could weld
That cursed weapon, when his cruell foes he queld. . . .

"He brought him in. The rowme was large and wyde,
As it some gyeld or solemne temple weare;
Many great golden pillours did upbeare
The massy roofe, and riches huge sustayne;
And every pillour decked was full deare
With crownes, and diademes, and titles vaine,
Which mortall princes wore whiles they on earth did rayne.

"A route of people there assembled were,
Of every sort and nation under skye,

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Which with great uprore preaced to draw nere
To th' upper part, where was advaunced hye
A stately siege of soveraine maiestye;
And thereon satt a Woman gorgeous gay,
And richly cladd in robes of royaltye,
That never earthly prince in such aray
His glory did enhaunce, and pompous pryde display. . . .

"There, as in glistring glory she did sitt,
She held a great gold chaine ylincked well,
Whose upper end to highest heven was knitt,
And lower part did reach to lowest hell." [9]

No artist's dream matches these visions: the glow of the furnaces beneath the vaults of the cavern, the lights flickering over the crowded figures, the throne, and the strange glitter of the gold shining in every direction through the darkness. The allegory assumes gigantic proportions. When the object is to show temperance struggling with temptations, Spenser deems it necessary to mass all the temptations together. He is treating of a general virtue; and as such a virtue is capable of every sort of resistance, he requires from it every sort of resistance alike; after the test of gold, that of pleasure. Thus the grandest and the most exquisite spectacles follow and are contrasted with each other, and all are supernatural; the graceful and the terrible are side by side—the happy gardens close by with the cursed subterranean cavern.

"No gate, but like one, being goodly dight
With bowes and braunches, which did broad dilate
Their clasping armes in wanton wreathings intricate:

"So fashioned a porch with rare device,
Archt over head with an embracing vine,
Whose bounches hanging downe seemed to entice
All passers-by to taste their lushious wine,
And did themselves into their hands incline,
As freely offering to be gathered;
Some deepe empurpled as the hyacine,
Some as the rubine laughing sweetely red,
Some like faire emeraudes, not yet well ripened. . . .

"And in the midst of all a fountaine stood,
Of richest substance that on earth might bee,
So pure and shiny that the silver flood
Through every channell running one might see;

[9] "The Faërie Queene," ii. c. 7, stanzas 28-46.

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Most goodly it with curious ymageree
Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
Of which some seemed with lively iollitee
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
Whylest others did themselves embay in liquid ioyes.

" And over all of purest gold was spred
A trayle of yvie in his native hew;
For the rich metall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well avis'd it vew,
Would surely deeme it to bee yvie trew;
Low his lascivious armes adown did creepe,
That themselves dipping in the silver dew
Their fleecy flowres they fearfully did steepe,
Which drops of christall seemd for wantones to weep.

" Infinit streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to such great quantitie,
That like a little lake it seemd to bee;
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
That through the waves one might the bottom see,
All pav'd beneath with jaspar shining bright,
That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle upright. . . .

" The ioyes birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th' angelicall soft trembling voyces made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all. . . .

" Upon a bed of roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin;
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Arachne cannot spin;
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.

" Her snowy brest was bare to ready spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n' ote therewith be fild;
And yet, through languour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then nectar, forth distild,

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That like pure orient perles adowne it trild;
And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not, like starry lights
Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright." [10]

Do we find here nothing but fairy land? Yes; here are finished pictures true and complete, composed with a painter's feeling, with choice of tints and outlines; our eyes are delighted by them. This reclining Acrasia has the pose of a goddess, or of one of Titian's courtesans. An Italian artist might copy these gardens, these flowing waters, these sculptured loves, those wreaths of creeping ivy thick with glossy leaves and fleecy flowers. Just before, in the infernal depths, the lights, with their long streaming rays, were fine, half smothered by the darkness; the lofty throne in the vast hall, between the pillars, in the midst of a swarming multitude, connected all the forms around it by drawing all looks towards one centre. The poet, here and throughout, is a colorist and an architect. However fantastic his world may be, it is not factitious; if it does not exist, it might have been; indeed, it should have been; it is the fault of circumstances if they do not so group themselves as to bring it to pass; taken by itself, it possesses that internal harmony by which a real thing, even a still higher harmony, exists, inasmuch as, without any regard to real things, it is altogether, and in its least detail, constructed with a view to beauty. Art has made its appearance; this is the great characteristic of the age, which distinguishes the "Faërie Queene" from all similar tales heaped up by the Middle Ages. Incoherent, mutilated, they lie like rubbish, or rough-hewn stones, which the weak hands of the *trouvères* could not build into a monument. At last the poets and artists appear, and with them the conception of beauty, to wit, the idea of general effect. They understand proportions, relations, contrasts; they compose. In their hands the blurred vague sketch becomes defined, complete, separate; it assumes color—is made a picture. Every object thus conceived and imaged acquires a definite existence as soon as it assumes a true form; centuries after, it will be acknowledged and admired, and men will be touched by it; and more, they will be touched by its author; for, besides the object which he paints,

[10] "The Faërie Queene," ii. c. 12, stanzas 53-78.

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the poet paints himself. His ruling idea is stamped upon the work which it produces and controls. Spenser is superior to his subject, comprehends it fully, frames it with a view to its end, in order to impress upon it the proper mark of his soul and his genius. Each story is modulated with respect to another, and all with respect to a certain effect which is being worked out. Thus a beauty issues from this harmony—the beauty in the poet's heart—which his whole work strives to express; a noble and yet a cheerful beauty, made up of moral elevation and sensuous seductions, English in sentiment, Italian in externals, chivalric in subject, modern in its perfection, representing a unique and wonderful epoch, the appearance of paganism in a Christian race, and the worship of form by an imagination of the North.

PART III.—PROSE

Section I.—The Decay of Poetry

Such an epoch can scarcely last, and the poetic vitality wears itself out by its very efflorescence, so that its expansion leads to its decline. From the beginning of the seventeenth century the subsidence of manners and genius grows apparent. Enthusiasm and respect decline. The minions and court-fops intrigue and pilfer, amid pedantry, puerility, and show. The court plunders, and the nation murmurs. The Commons begin to show a stern front, and the king, scolding them like a schoolmaster, gives way before them like a little boy. This sorry monarch (James I) suffers himself to be bullied by his favorites, writes to them like a gossip, calls himself a Solomon, airs his literary vanity, and in granting an audience to a courtier, recommends him to become a scholar, and expects to be complimented on his own scholarly attainments. The dignity of the government is weakened, and the people's loyalty is cooled. Royalty declines, and revolution is fostered. At the same time, the noble chivalric paganism degenerates into a base and coarse sensuality. The king, we are told, on one occasion, had got so drunk with his royal brother Christian of Denmark, that they both had to be carried to bed. Sir John Harrington says:

"The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication. . . . The Lady who did play the Queen's part (in the

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Masque of the Queen of Sheba) did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties; but, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, tho I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean. His Majestie then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity: Faith . . . left the court in a staggering condition. . . . They were both sick and spewing in the lower hall. Next came Victory, who . . . by a strange medley of versification . . . and after much lamentable utterance was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the anti-chamber. As for Peace, she most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming. I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety in our Queen's days." [1]

Observe that these tipsy women were great ladies. The reason is, that the grand ideas which introduce an epoch, end, in their exhaustion, by preserving nothing but their vices; the proud sentiment of natural life becomes a vulgar appeal to the senses. An entrance, an arch of triumph under James I, often represented obscenities; and later, when the sensual instincts, exasperated by Puritan tyranny, begin to raise their heads once more, we shall find under the Restoration excess revelling in its low vices, and triumphing in its shamelessness.

Meanwhile literature undergoes a change; the powerful breeze which had wafted it on, and which, amidst singularity, refinement, exaggerations, had made it great, slackened and diminished. With Carew, Suckling, and Herrick, prettiness takes the place of the beautiful. That which strikes them is no longer the general features of things; and they no longer try to express the inner character of what they describe. They no longer possess that liberal conception, that instinctive penetration, by which we sympathize with objects, and grow capable of creating them anew. They no longer boast of that overflow of

[1] "Nugæ Antiquæ," i. 349 et passim.

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emotions, that excess of ideas and images, which compelled a man to relieve himself by words, to act externally, to represent freely and boldly the interior drama which made his whole body and heart tremble. They are rather wits of the court, cavaliers of fashion, who wish to show off their imagination and style. In their hands love becomes gallantry; they write songs, fugitive pieces, compliments to the ladies. There are no more upwellings from the heart. They write eloquent phrases in order to be applauded, and flattering exaggerations in order to please. The divine faces, the serious or profound looks, the virgin or impassioned expressions which burst forth at every step in the early poets, have disappeared; here we see nothing but agreeable countenances, painted in agreeable verses. Blackguardism is not far off; we meet with it already in Suckling, and crudity to boot, and prosaic epicurism; their sentiment is expressed before long, in such a phrase as: "Let us amuse ourselves, and a fig for the rest." The only objects they can still paint are little graceful things, a kiss, a May-day festivity, a dewy primrose, a daffodil, a marriage morning, a bee.[2] Herrick and Suckling especially produce little exquisite poems, del-

[2] "Some asked me where the Rubies grew,
And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.
Some ask'd how Pearls did grow, and where;
Then spake I to my girle,
To part her lips, and shew me there
The quarelets of Pearl.
One ask'd me where the roses grew;
I bade him not go seek;
But forthwith bade my Julia show
A bud in either cheek."
—Herrick's "Hesperides," ed. Walford, 1859; The Rock of Rubies, p. 32.

"About the sweet bag of a bee,
Two Cupids fell at odds;
And whose the pretty prize shu'd be,
They vow'd to ask the Gods.
Which Venus hearing, thither came,
And for their boldness stript them;
And taking thence from each his flame,
With rods of mirtle whipt them.
Which done, to still their wanton cries,
When quiet grown sh'ad seen them,
She kist and wip'd their dove-like eyes,
And gave the bag between them."
—Herrick, Ibid. The Bag of the Bee, p. 42.

"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Pr'ythee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Pr'ythee, why so pale?
Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Pr'ythee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,

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icate, ever pleasant or agreeable, like those attributed to Anacreon, or those which abound in the Anthology. In fact, here, as at the Grecian period alluded to, we are in the decline of paganism; energy departs, the reign of the agreeable begins. People do not relinquish the worship of beauty and pleasure, but dally with them. They deck and fit them to their taste; they cease to subdue and bend men, who enjoy them whilst they amuse them. It is the last beam of a setting sun; the genuine poetic sentiment dies out with Sedley, Waller, and the rhymesters of the Restoration; they write prose in verse; their heart is on a level with their style, and with an exact language we find the commencement of a new age and a new art.

Side by side with prettiness comes affectation; it is the second mark of their decadence. Instead of writing to express things, they write to say them well; they outbid their neighbors, and strain every mode of speech; they push art over on the one side to which it had a leaning; and as in this age it had a leaning towards vehemence and imagination, they pile up their emphasis and coloring. A jargon always springs out of a style. In all arts, the first masters, the inventors, discover the idea, steep themselves in it, and leave it to effect its outward form. Then come the second class, the imitators, who sedulously repeat this form, and alter it by exaggeration. Some nevertheless have talent, as Quarles, Herbert, Habington, Donne in particular, a pungent satirist, of terrible crudeness,[8] a powerful poet, of a

Saying nothing do't?
Pr'ythee, why so mute?
Quit, quit for shame; this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her.
The devil take her!"
—Sir John Suckling's Works, ed. A. Suckling, 1836, p. 70.

"As when a lady, walking Flora's bower,
Picks here a pink, and there a gilly-flower,
Now plucks a violet from her purple bed,
And then a primrose, the year's maidenhead,
There nips the brier, here the lover's pansy,
Shifting her dainty pleasures with her fancy,
This on her arms, and that she lists to wear
Upon the borders of her curious hair;
At length a rose-bud (passing all the rest)
She plucks, and bosoms in her lily breast."—Quarles, Stanzas.

[8] See, in particular, his satire against courtiers. The following is against imitators:

"But he is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Others wit's fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spew,
As his owne things; and they 're his owne, 't is true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meat was mine, th' excrement is his owne."
—Donne's "Satires," 1639. Satire ii. p. 128.

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precise and intense imagination, who still preserves something of the energy and thrill of the original inspiration.[4] But he deliberately spoils all these gifts, and succeeds with great difficulty in concocting a piece of nonsense. For instance, the impassioned poets had said to their mistress that if they lost her, they should hate all other women. Donne, in order to eclipse them, says:

> "O do not die, for I shall hate
> All women so, when thou art gone,
> That thee I shall not celebrate
> When I remember thou wast one." [5]

Twenty times while reading him we rub our brow, and ask with astonishment, how a man could have so tormented and contorted himself, strained his style, refined on his refinement, hit upon such absurd comparisons? But this was the spirit of the age; they made an effort to be ingeniously absurd. A flea had bitten Donne and his mistress, and he says:

> "This flea is you and I, and this
> Our mariage bed and mariage temple is.
> Though Parents grudge, and you, w' are met,
> And cloyster'd in these living walls of Jet.
> Though use make you apt to kill me,
> Let not to that selfe-murder added be,
> And sacrilege, three sins in killing three." [6]

The Marquis de Mascarille[7] never found anything to equal this. Would you have believed a writer could invent such absurdities? She and he made but one, for both are but one with the flea, and so one could not be killed without the other. Observe that the wise Malherbe wrote very similar enormities, in

[4] "When I behold a stream, which from the spring
Doth with doubtful melodious murmuring,
Or in a speechless slumber calmly ride
Her wedded channel's bosom, and there chide
And bend her brows, and swell, if any bough
Does but stoop down to kiss her utmost brow;
Yet if her often gnawing kisses win
The traiterous banks to gape and let her in,
She rusheth violently and doth divorce
Her from her native and her long-kept course,
And roares, and braves it, and in gallant scorn
In flatt'ring eddies promising return,
She flouts her channel, which thenceforth is dry,
Then say I: That is she, and this am I."—Donne, Elegy vi.

[5] Donne's Poems, 1639, "A Feaver," p. 15.

[6] Ibid. "The Flea," p. 1.

[7] A valet in Molière's "Les Précieuses Ridicules," who apes and exaggerates his master's manners and style, and pretends to be a marquess. He also appears in "L'Etourdi" and "Le dépit Amoureux," by the same author.—Tr.

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the "Tears of St. Peter," and that the sonneteers of Italy and Spain reach simultaneously the same height of folly, and you will agree that throughout Europe at that time they were at the close of a poetical epoch.

On this boundary line of a closing and a dawning literature a poet appeared, one of the most approved and illustrious of his time, Abraham Cowley,[8] a precocious child, a reader and a versifier like Pope, and who, like Pope, having known passions less than books, busied himself less about things than about words. Literary exhaustion has seldom been more manifest. He possesses all the capacity to say what pleases him, but he has precisely nothing to say. The substance has vanished, leaving in its place an empty form. In vain he tries the epic, the Pindaric strophe, all kinds of stanzas, odes, short lines, long lines; in vain he calls to his assistance botanical and philosophical similes, all the erudition of the university, all the recollections of antiquity, all the ideas of new science: we yawn as we read him. Except in a few descriptive verses, two or three graceful tendernesses,[9] he feels nothing, he speaks only; he is a poet of the brain. His collection of amorous pieces is but a vehicle for a scientific test, and serves to show that he has read the authors, that he knows geography, that he is well versed in anatomy, that he has a smattering of medicine and astronomy, that he has at his service comparisons and allusions enough to rack the brains of his readers. He will speak in this wise:

> "Beauty, thou active—passive Ill!
> Which dy'st thyself as fast as thou dost kill!"

Or will remark that his mistress is to blame for spending three hours every morning at her toilet, because

> "They make that Beauty Tyranny,
> That's else a Civil-government."

After reading two hundred pages, you feel disposed to box his ears. You have to think, by way of consolation, that every grand age must draw to a close, that this one could not do so otherwise, that the old glow of enthusiasm, the sudden flood of rapture, images, whimsical and audacious fancies, which once rolled through the minds of men, arrested now and cooled down,

[8] 1608-1667. I refer to the eleventh edition, of 1710.

[9] "The Spring" ("The Mistress," i. 72).

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could only exhibit dross, a curdling scum, a multitude of brilliant and offensive points. You say to yourself that, after all, Cowley had perhaps talent; you find that he had in fact one, a new talent, unknown to the old masters, the sign of a new culture, which needs other manners, and announces a new society. Cowley had these manners, and belongs to this society. He was a well-governed, reasonable, well-informed, polished, well-educated man, who, after twelve years of service and writing in France, under Queen Henrietta, retires at last wisely into the country, where he studies natural history, and prepares a treatise on religion, philosophizing on men and life, fertile in general reflections and ideas, a moralist, bidding his executor "to let nothing stand in his writings which might seem the least in the world to be an offence against religion or good manners." Such intentions and such a life produce and indicate less a poet, that is, a seer, a creator, than a literary man; I mean a man who can think and speak, and who therefore ought to have read much, learned much, written much, ought to possess a calm and clear mind, to be accustomed to polite society, sustained conversation, pleasantry. In fact, Cowley is an author by profession, the oldest of those who in England deserve the name. His prose is as easy and sensible as his poetry is contorted and unreasonable. A polished man, writing for polished men, pretty much as he would speak to them in a drawing-room—this I take to be the idea which they had of a good author in the seventeenth century. It is the idea which Cowley's essays leave of his character; it is the kind of talent which the writers of the coming age take for their model, and he is the first of that grave and amiable group which, continued in Temple, reaches so far as to include Addison.

Section II.—The Intellectual Level of the Renaissance

Having reached this point, the Renaissance seemed to have attained its limit, and, like a drooping and faded flower, to be ready to leave its place for a new bud which began to spring up amongst its withered leaves. At all events, a living and unexpected shoot sprang from the old declining stock. At the moment when art languished, science shot forth; the whole labor of the age ended in this. The fruits are not unlike; on the con-

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trary, they come from the same sap, and by the diversity of the shape only manifest two distinct periods of the inner growth which has produced them. Every art ends in a science, and all poetry in a philosophy. For science and philosophy do but translate into precise formulas the original conceptions which art and poetry render sensible by imaginary figures: when once the idea of an epoch is manifested in verse by ideal creations, it naturally comes to be expressed in prose by positive arguments. That which had struck men on escaping from ecclesiastical oppression and monkish asceticism was the pagan idea of a life true to nature, and freely developed. They had found nature buried behind scholasticism, and they had expressed it in poems and paintings; in Italy by superb healthy corporeality, in England by vehement and unconventional spirituality, with such divination of its laws, instincts, and forms, that we might extract from their theatre and their pictures a complete theory of soul and body. When enthusiasm is past, curiosity begins. The sentiment of beauty gives way to the need of truth. The theory contained in works of imagination frees itself. The gaze continues fixed on nature, not to admire now, but to understand. From painting we pass to anatomy, from the drama to moral philosophy, from grand poetical divinations to great scientific views; the second continue the first, and the same mind displays itself in both; for what art had represented, and science proceeds to observe, are living things, with their complex and complete structure, set in motion by their internal forces, with no supernatural intervention. Artists and savants all set out, without knowing it themselves, from the same master conception, to wit, that nature subsists of herself, that every existence has in its own womb the source of its action, that the causes of events are the innate laws of things; an all-powerful idea, from which was to issue the modern civilization, and which, at the time I write of, produced in England and Italy, as before in Greece, genuine sciences, side by side with a complete art: after da Vinci and Michel Angelo, the school of anatomists, mathematicians, naturalists, ending with Galileo; after Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Shakespeare, the school of thinkers who surround Bacon and lead up to Harvey.

We have not far to look for this school. In the interregnum of Christianity the dominating bent of mind belongs to it. It

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was paganism which reigned in Elizabeth's court, not only in letters, but in doctrine—a paganism of the North, always serious, generally sombre, but which was based, like that of the South, on natural forces. In some men all Christianity had passed away; many proceeded to atheism through excess of rebellion and debauchery, like Marlowe and Greene. With others, like Shakespeare, the idea of God scarcely makes its appearance; they see in our poor short human life only a dream, and beyond it the long sad sleep: for them, death is the goal of life; at most, a dark gulf, into which man plunges, uncertain of the issue. If they carry their gaze beyond, they perceive,[1] not the spiritual soul welcomed into a purer world, but the corpse abandoned to the damp earth, or the ghost hovering about the churchyard. They speak like sceptics or superstitious men, never as true believers. Their heroes have human, not religious, virtues; against crime they rely on honor and the love of the beautiful, not on piety and the fear of God. If others, at intervals, like Sidney and Spenser, catch a glimpse of the Divine, it is as a vague ideal light, a sublime Platonic phantom, which has no resemblance to a personal God, a strict inquisitor of the slightest motions of the heart. He appears at the summit of things, like the splendid crown of the world, but He does not weigh upon human life; He leaves it intact and free, only turning it towards the beautiful. Man does not know as yet the sort of narrow prison in which official cant and respectable creeds were, later on, to confine activity and intelligence. Even the believers, sincere Christians like Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, discard all oppressive sternness, reduce Christianity to a sort of moral poetry, and allow naturalism to subsist beneath religion. In such a broad and open channel, speculation could spread its wings. With Lord Herbert appeared a systematic deism; with Milton and Algernon Sidney, a philosophical religion; Clarendon went so far as to compare Lord Falkland's gardens to the groves of Academe. Against the rigorism of the Puritans, Chillingworth, Hales, Hooker, the greatest doctors of the English Church, give a large place to natural reason—so large, that never, even to this day, has it made such an advance.

[1] See in Shakespeare, "The Tempest," "Measure for Measure," "Hamlet"; in Beaumont and Fletcher, "Thierry and Theodoret," Act iv.; Webster, passim.

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An astonishing irruption of facts—the discovery of America, the revival of antiquity, the restoration of philology, the invention of the arts, the development of industries, the march of human curiosity over the whole of the past and the whole of the globe—came to furnish subject-matter, and prose began its reign. Sidney, Wilson, Ascham, and Puttenham explored the rules of style; Hakluyt and Purchas compiled the cyclopædia of travel and the description of every land; Holinshed, Speed, Raleigh, Stowe, Knolles, Daniel, Thomas May, Lord Herbert, founded history; Camden, Spelman, Cotton, Usher, and Selden inaugurate scholarship; a legion of patient workers, of obscure collectors, of literary pioneers, amassed, arranged, and sifted the documents which Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Bodley stored up in their libraries; whilst utopians, moralists, painters of manners—Thomas More, Joseph Hall, John Earle, Owen Feltham, Burton—described and passed judgment on the modes of life, continued with Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, and Izaak Walton up to the middle of the next century, and add to the number of controversialists and politicians who, with Hooker, Taylor, Chillingworth, Algernon Sidney, Harrington, study religion, society, church, and state. A copious and confused fermentation, from which abundance of thoughts rose, but few notable books. Noble prose, such as was heard at the court of Louis XIV, in the house of Pollio, in the schools at Athens, such as rhetorical and sociable nations know how to produce, was altogether lacking. These men had not the spirit of analysis, the art of following step by step the natural order of ideas, nor the spirit of conversation, the talent never to weary or shock others. Their imagination is too little regulated, and their manners too little polished. They who had mixed most in the world, even Sidney, speak roughly what they think, and as they think it. Instead of glossing they exaggerate. They blurt out all, and withhold nothing. When they do not employ excessive compliments, they take to coarse jokes. They are ignorant of measured liveliness, refined raillery, delicate flattery. They rejoice in gross puns, dirty allusions. They mistake involved charades and grotesque images for wit. Though they are great lords and ladies, they talk like ill-bred persons, lovers of buffoonery, of shows, and bear-fights. With some, as Overbury or Sir Thomas Browne, prose is so much run over by po-

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etry, that it covers its narrative with images, and hides ideas under its pictures. They load their style with flowery comparisons, which produce one another, and mount one above another, so that sense disappears, and ornament only is visible. In short, they are generally pedants, still stiff with the rust of the school; they divide and subdivide, propound theses, definitions; they argue solidly and heavily, and quote their authors in Latin, and even in Greek; they square their massive periods, and learnedly knock their adversaries down, and their readers too, as a natural consequence. They are never on the prose-level, but always above or below—above by their poetic genius, below by the weight of their education and the barbarism of their manners. But they think seriously and for themselves; they are deliberate; they are convinced and touched by what they say. Even in the compiler we find a force and loyalty of spirit, which give confidence and cause pleasure. Their writings are like the powerful and heavy engravings of their contemporaries, the maps of Hofnagel for instance, so harsh and so instructive; their conception is sharp and clear; they have the gift of perceiving every object, not under a general aspect, like the classical writers, but specially and individually. It is not man in the abstract, the citizen as he is everywhere, the countryman as such, that they represent, but James or Thomas, Smith or Brown, of such a parish, from such an office, with such and such attitude or dress, distinct from all others; in short, they see, not the idea, but the individual. Imagine the disturbance that such a disposition produces in a man's head, how the regular order of ideas becomes deranged by it; how every object, with the infinite medley of its forms, properties, appendages, will thenceforth fasten itself by a hundred points of contact unforeseen to other objects, and bring before the mind a series and a family; what boldness language will derive from it; what familiar, picturesque, absurd words, will break forth in succession; how the dash, the unforeseen, the originality and inequality of invention, will stand out. Imagine, at the same time, what a hold this form of mind has on objects, how many facts it condenses in each conception; what a mass of personal judgments, foreign authorities, suppositions, guesses, imaginations, it spreads over every subject; with what venturesome and creative fecundity it engenders both truth and conjecture. It is an extraordinary chaos of thoughts and forms,

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often abortive, still more often barbarous, sometimes grand. But from this superfluity something lasting and great is produced; namely, science, and we have only to examine more closely into one or two of these works to see the new creation emerge from the blocks and the *débris*.

Section III.—Robert Burton

Two writers especially display this state of mind. The first, Robert Burton, a clergyman and university recluse, who passed his life in libraries, and dabbled in all the sciences, as learned as Rabelais, having an inexhaustible and overflowing memory; unequal, moreover, gifted with enthusiasm, and spasmodically gay, but as a rule sad and morose, to the extent of confessing in his epitaph that melancholy made up his life and his death; in the first place original, liking his own common-sense, and one of the earliest models of that singular English mood which, withdrawing man within himself, develops in him, at one time imagination, at another scrupulosity, at another oddity, and makes of him, according to circumstances, a poet, an eccentric, a humorist, a madman, or a puritan. He read on for thirty years, put an encyclopædia into his head, and now, to amuse and relieve himself, takes a folio of blank paper. Twenty lines of a poet, a dozen lines of a treatise on agriculture, a folio page of heraldry, a description of rare fishes, a paragraph of a sermon on patience, the record of the fever fits of hypochondria, the history of the particle *that*, a scrap of metaphysics—that is what passes through his brain in a quarter of an hour; it is a carnival of ideas and phrases, Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, philosophical, geometrical, medical, poetical, astrological, musical, pedagogic, heaped one on the other; an enormous medley, a prodigious mass of jumbled quotations, jostling thoughts, with the vivacity and the transport of a feast of unreason.

"This roving humour (though not with like success) I have ever had, and, like a ranging spaniel that barks at every bird he sees, leaving his game, I have followed all, saving that which I should, and may justly complain, and truly, *qui ubique est, nusquam est*, which Gesner did in modesty, that I have read many books, but to little purpose, for want of good method, I have confusedly tumbled over divers authors in our libraries with small profit, for want of art, order, memory, judgment.

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I never travelled but in map or card, in which my unconfined thoughts have freely expatiated, as having ever been especially delighted with the study of cosmography. Saturn was lord of my geniture, culminating, etc., and Mars principal significator of manners, in partile conjunction with mine ascendent; both fortunate in their houses, etc. I am not poor, I am not rich; *nihil est, nihil deest;* I have little; I want nothing: all my treasure is in Minerva's tower. Greater preferment as I could never get, so am I not in debt for it. I have a competency (*laus Deo*) from my noble and munificent patrons. Though I live still a collegiat student, as Democritus in his garden, and lead a monastique life, *ipse mihi theatrum,* sequestred from those tumults and troubles of the world, *et tanquam in speculâ positus* (as he said), in some high place above you all, like *Stoïcus sapiens, omnia sæcula præterita præsentiaque videns, uno velut intuitu,* I hear and see what is done abroad, how others run, ride, turmoil, and macerate themselves in court and countrey. Far from these wrangling lawsuits, *aulæ vanitatem, fori ambitionem, ridere mecum soleo:* I laugh at all, only secure, lest my suit go amiss, my ships perish, corn and cattle miscarry, trade decay; I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for; a mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and how they act their parts, which methinks are diversely presented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene. I hear new news every day: and those ordinary rumours of war, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions; of towns taken, cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, etc., daily musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwracks, piracies, and sea-fights, peace, leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarms—a vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, laws, proclamations, complaints, grievances—are daily brought to our ears: new books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, etc. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubilies, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, playes: then again, as in a new shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villanies in all kinds, funerals, burials, death of princes, new discoveries, expeditions; now comical, then tragical matters. To-day we hear of new lords and officers created, to-morrow of some great men deposed, and then again of fresh honours conferred: one is let loose, another imprisoned: one purchaseth, another breaketh: he thrives, his neighbour turns bankrupt; now plenty, then again dearth and famine; one runs, another rides, wrangles, laughs, weeps, etc. Thus I daily hear, and such like, both private and publick news." [1]

"For what a world of books offers itself, in all subjects, arts, and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the reader? In arithme-

[1] "Anatomy of Melancholy," 12th ed. 1821, 2 vols.; Democritus to the Reader, i. 4.

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tick, geometry, perspective, optick, astronomy, architecture, *sculptura, pictura,* of which so many and such elaborate treatises are of late written: in mechanicks and their mysteries, military matters, navigation, riding of horses, fencing, swimming, gardening, planting, great tomes of husbandry, cookery, faulconry, hunting, fishing, fowling, etc., with exquisite pictures of all sports, games, and what not. In musick, metaphysicks, natural and moral philosophy, philologie, in policy, heraldry, genealogy, chronology, etc., they afford great tomes, or those studies of antiquity, etc., *et quid subtilius arithmeticis inventionibus? quia jucundius musicis rationibus? quid divinius astronomicis? quid rectius geometricis demonstrationibus?* What so sure, what so pleasant? He that shall but see the geometrical tower of Garezenda at Bologne in Italy, the steeple and clock at Strasborough, will admire the effects of art, or that engine of Archimedes to remove the earth itself, if he had but a place to fasten his instrument. *Archimedis cochlea,* and rare devises to corrivate waters, musick instruments, and trisyllable echoes again, again, and again repeated, with miriades of such. What vast tomes are extant in law, physick, and divinity, for profit, pleasure, practice, speculation, in verse or prose, etc.! Their names alone are the subject of whole volumes; we have thousands of authors of all sorts, many great libraries, full well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates, and he is a very block that is affected with none of them. Some take an infinite delight to study the very languages wherein these books are written—Hebrew, Greek, Syriack, Chalde, Arabick, etc. Methinks it would well please any man to look upon a geographical map (*suavi animum delectatione allicere, ob incredibilem rerum varietatem et jucunditatem, et ad pleniorem sui cognitionem excitare*), chorographical, topographical delineations; to behold, as it were, all the remote provinces, towns, cities of the world, and never to go forth of the limits of his study; to measure, by the scale and compasse, their extent, distance, examine their site. Charles the Great (as Platina writes) had three faire silver tables, in one of which superficies was a large map of Constantinople, in the second Rome neatly engraved, in the third an exquisite description of the whole world; and much delight he took in them. What greater pleasure can there now be, than to view those elaborate maps of Ortelius, Mercator, Hondius, etc.? to peruse those books of cities put out by Braunus and Hogenbergius? to read those exquisite descriptions of Maginus, Munster, Herrera, Laet, Merula, Boterus, Leander Albertus, Camden, Leo Afer, Adricomius, Nic. Gerbelius, etc.? those famous expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Americus Vespucius, Marcus Polus the Venetian, Lod. Vertomannus, Aloysius Cadamustus, etc.? those accurate diaries of Portugals, Hollanders, of Bartison, Oliver a Nort, etc., Hacluit's Voyages, Pet. Martyr's Decades, Benzo, Lerius, Linschoten's relations, those Hodæporicons of Jod. a Meggen, Brocarde the Monke, Bredenbachius, Jo. Dublinius, Sands, etc., to Jerusalem, Egypt, and other remote places of the world? those pleasant itineraries of Paulus Hentzerus, Jodocus Sincerus, Dux Polonus, etc.? to read Bellonius observations, P. Gillius his survayes;

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those parts of America, set out, and curiously cut in pictures, by Fratres a Bry? To see a well cut herbal, hearbs, trees, flowers, plants, all vegetals, expressed in their proper colours to the life, as that of Matthiolus upon Dioscorides, Delacampius, Lobel, Bauhinus, and that last voluminous and mighty herbal of Besler of Noremberge; wherein almost every plant is to his own bignesse. To see birds, beasts, and fishes of the sea, spiders, gnats, serpents, flies, etc., all creatures set out by the same art, and truly expressed in lively colours, with an exact description of their natures, vertues, qualities, etc., as hath been accurately performed by Ælian, Gesner, Ulysses Aldrovandus, Bellonius, Rondoletius, Hippolytus Salvianus, etc." [2]

He is never-ending; words, phrases, overflow, are heaped up, overlap each other, and flow on, carrying the reader along, deafened, stunned, half drowned, unable to touch ground in the deluge. Burton is inexhaustible. There are no ideas which he does not iterate under fifty forms: when he has exhausted his own, he pours out upon us other men's—the classics, the rarest authors, known only by savants—authors rarer still, known only to the learned; he borrows from all. Underneath these deep caverns of erudition and science, there is one blacker and more unknown than all the others, filled with forgotten authors, with crackjaw names, Besler of Nuremberg, Adricomius, Linschoten, Brocarde, Bredenbachius. Amidst all these antediluvian monsters, bristling with Latin terminations, he is at his ease; he sports with them, laughs, skips from one to the other, drives them all abreast. He is like old Proteus, the sturdy rover, who in one hour, with his team of hippopotami, makes the circuit of the ocean.

What subject does he take? Melancholy, his own individual mood; and he takes it like a schoolman. None of St. Thomas Aquinas's treatises is more regularly constructed than his. This torrent of erudition flows in geometrically planned channels, turning off at right angles without deviating by a line. At the head of every part you will find a synoptical and analytical table, with hyphens, brackets, each division begetting its subdivisions, each subdivision its sections, each section its subsections: of the malady in general, of melancholy in particular, of its nature, its seat, its varieties, causes, symptoms, prognosis; of its cure by permissible means, by forbidden means, by dietetic means, by pharmaceutical means. After the scholastic process, he

[2] "Anatomy of Melancholy," i. part 2, sec. 2, Mem. 4, p. 420 et passim.

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descends from the general to the particular, and disposes each emotion and idea in its labelled case. In this framework, supplied by the Middle Ages, he heaps up the whole, like a man of the Renaissance—the literary description of passions and the medical description of madness, details of the hospital with a satire on human follies, physiological treatises side by side with personal confidences, the recipes of the apothecary with moral counsels, remarks on love with the history of evacuations. The discrimination of ideas has not yet been effected; doctor and poet, man of letters and savant, he is all at once; for want of dams, ideas pour like different liquids into the same vat, with strange spluttering and bubbling, with an unsavory smell and odd effect. But the vat is full, and from this admixture are produced potent compounds which no preceding age has known.

Section IV.—Sir Thomas Browne

For in this mixture there is an effectual leaven, the poetic sentiment, which stirs up and animates the vast erudition, which will not be confined to dry catalogues; which, interpreting every fact, every object, disentangles or divines a mysterious soul within it, and agitates the whole mind of man, by representing to him the restless world within and without him as a grand enigma. Let us conceive a kindred mind to Shakespeare's, a scholar and an observer instead of an actor and a poet, who in place of creating is occupied in comprehending, but who, like Shakespeare, applies himself to living things, penetrates their internal structure, puts himself in communication with their actual laws, imprints in himself fervently and scrupulously the smallest details of their outward appearance; who at the same time extends his penetrating surmises beyond the region of observation, discerns behind visible phenomena some world obscure yet sublime, and trembles with a kind of veneration before the vast, indistinct, but peopled darkness on whose surface our little universe hangs quivering. Such a one is Sir Thomas Browne, a naturalist, a philosopher, a scholar, a physician, and a moralist, almost the last of the generation which produced Jeremy Taylor and Shakespeare. No thinker bears stronger witness to the wandering and inventive curiosity of the age. No

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writer has better displayed the brilliant and sombre imagination of the North. No one has spoken with a more eloquent emotion of death, the vast night of forgetfulness, of the all-devouring pit, of human vanity, which tries to create an ephemeral immortality out of glory or sculptured stones. No one has revealed, in more glowing and original expressions, the poetic sap which flows through all the minds of the age.

"But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it. Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal duration; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon. Who knows whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favour of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

"Oblivion is not to be hired. The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto the current arithmetick which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right declensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time, that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—diuturnity is a dream, and folly of expectation.

"Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision of nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days; and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. . . . All was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is

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become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams. . . . Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infancy of his nature. . . . Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity." [1]

These are almost the words of a poet, and it is just this poet's imagination which urges him onward into science.[2] Face to face with the productions of nature he abounds in conjectures, comparisons; he gropes about, proposing explanations, making trials, extending his guesses like so many flexible and vibrating feelers into the four corners of the globe, into the most distant regions of fancy and truth. As he looks upon the tree-like and foliaceous crusts which are formed upon the surface of freezing liquids, he asks himself if this be not a regeneration of vegetable essences, dissolved in the liquid. At the sight of curdling blood or milk, he inquires whether there be not something analogous to the formation of the bird in the egg, or to the coagulation of chaos which gave birth to our world. In presence of that impalpable force which makes liquids freeze, he asks if apoplexy and cataract are not the effects of a like power, and do not indicate also the presence of a congealing agency. He is in presence of nature as an artist, a man of letters in presence of a living countenance, marking every feature, every movement of physiognomy, so as to be able to divine the passions and the inner disposition, ceaselessly correcting and undoing his interpretations, kept in agitation by thought of the invisible forces which operate beneath the visible envelope. The whole of the Middle Ages and of antiquity, with their theories and imaginations, Platonism, Cabalism, Christian theology, Aristotle's substantial forms, the specific forms of the alchemists—all human speculations, entangled and transformed one with the other, meet simultaneously in his brain, so as to open up to him vistas of this unknown world. The accumulation, the pile, the confusion, the fermentation and the inner swarming, mingled with vapors and flashes, the tumultuous overloading of his imagination and his mind, oppress and agitate him. In this expectation and emotion his curiosity takes hold of everything; in reference

[1] "The Works of Sir Thomas Browne," ed. Wilkin, 1852, 3 vols. "Hydriotaphia," iii. ch. v. 14 et passim.

[2] See Milsand, Étude sur Sir Thomas Browne, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," 1858.

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to the least fact, the most special, the most obsolete, the most chimerical, he conceives a chain of complicated investigations, calculating how the ark could contain all creatures, with their provision of food; how Perpenna, at a banquet, arranged the guests so as to strike Sertorius; what trees must have grown on the banks of Acheron, supposing that there were any; whether quincunx plantations had not their origin in Eden, and whether the numbers and geometrical figures contained in the lozenge-form are not met with in all the productions of nature and art. You may recognize here the exuberance and the strange caprices of an inner development too ample and too strong. Archæology, chemistry, history, nature, there is nothing in which he is not passionately interested, which does not cause his memory and his inventive powers to overflow, which does not summon up within him the idea of some force, certainly admirable, possibly infinite. But what completes his picture, what signalizes the advance of science, is the fact that his imagination provides a counterbalance against itself. He is as fertile in doubts as he is in explanations. If he sees a thousand reasons which tend to one view, he sees also a thousand which tend to the contrary. At the two extremities of the same fact, he raises up to the clouds, but in equal piles, the scaffolding of contradictory arguments. Having made a guess, he knows that it is but a guess; he pauses, ends with a perhaps, recommends verification. His writings consist only of opinions, given as such; even his principal work is a refutation of popular errors. In the main, he proposes questions, suggests explanations, suspends his judgments, nothing more; but this is enough; when the search is so eager, when the paths in which it proceeds are so numerous, when it is so scrupulous in securing its hold, the issue of the pursuit is sure; we are but a few steps from the truth.

Section V.—Francis Bacon

In this band of scholars, dreamers, and inquirers, appears the most comprehensive, sensible, originative of the minds of the age, Francis Bacon, a great and luminous intellect, one of the finest of this poetic progeny, who, like his predecessors, was naturally disposed to clothe his ideas in the most splendid dress: in

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this age, a thought did not seem complete until it had assumed form and color. But what distinguishes him from the others is, that with him an image only serves to concentrate meditation. He reflected long, stamped on his mind all the parts and relations of his subject; he is master of it, and then, instead of exposing this complete idea in a graduated chain of reasoning, he embodies it in a comparison so expressive, exact, lucid, that behind the figure we perceive all the details of the idea, like liquor in a fine crystal vase. Judge of his style by a single example:

"For as water, whether it be the dew of Heaven or the springs of the earth, easily scatters and loses itself in the ground, except it be collected into some receptacle, where it may by union and consort comfort and sustain itself (and for that cause, the industry of man hath devised aqueducts, cisterns, and pools, and likewise beautified them with various ornaments of magnificence and state, as well as for use and necessity); so this excellent liquor of knowledge, whether it descend from divine inspiration or spring from human sense, would soon perish and vanish into oblivion, if it were not preserved in books, traditions, conferences, and especially in places appointed for such matters as universities, colleges, and schools, where it may have both a fixed habitation, and means and opportunity of increasing and collecting itself." [1]

"The greatest error of all the rest, is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace, for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground, for strife and contention; or a shop, for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate." [2]

This is his mode of thought, by symbols, not by analysis; instead of explaining his idea, he transposes and translates it—translates it entire, to the smallest details, enclosing all in the majesty of a grand period, or in the brevity of a striking sentence. Thence springs a style of admirable richness, gravity, and vigor, now solemn and symmetrical, now concise and pierc-

[1] Bacon's Works. Translation of the "De Augmentis Scientiarum," Book ii.; To the King.

[2] Ibid. Book i. The true end of learning mistaken.

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ing, always elaborate and full of color.[3] There is nothing in English prose superior to his diction.

Thence is derived also his manner of conceiving things. He is not a dialectician, like Hobbes or Descartes, apt in arranging ideas, in educing one from another, in leading his reader from the simple to the complex by an unbroken chain. He is a producer of conceptions and of sentences. The matter being explored, he says to us: "Such it is; touch it not on that side; it must be approached from the other." Nothing more; no proof, no effort to convince: he affirms, and does nothing more; he has thought in the manner of artists and poets, and he speaks after the manner of prophets and seers. *Cogitata et visa* this title of one of his books might be the title of all. The most admirable, the "Novum Organum," is a string of aphorisms—a collection, as it were, of scientific decrees, as of an oracle who foresees the future and reveals the truth. And to make the resemblance complete, he expresses them by poetical figures, by enigmatic abbreviations, almost in Sibylline verses: *Idola specûs, Idola tribûs, Idola fori, Idola theatri,* everyone will recall these strange names, by which he signifies the four kinds of illusions to which man is subject.[4] Shakespeare and the seers do not contain more vigorous or expressive condensations of thought, more resembling inspiration, and in Bacon they are to be found everywhere. On the whole, his process is that of the creators; it is intuition, not reasoning. When he has laid up his store of facts, the greatest possible, on some vast subject, on some entire province of the mind, on the whole anterior philosophy, on the general condition of the sciences, on the power and limits of human reason, he casts over all this a comprehensive view, as it were a great net, brings up a universal idea, condenses his idea into a maxim, and hands it to us with the words, "Verify and profit by it."

There is nothing more hazardous, more like fantasy, than this mode of thought, when it is not checked by natural and good strong sense. This common-sense, which is a kind of natural divination, the stable equilibrium of an intellect always gravitating to the true, like the needle to the pole, Bacon possesses in

[3] Especially in the Essays.

[4] See also "Novum Organum," Books i. and ii.; the twenty-seven kinds of examples, with their metaphorical names: Instantiæ crucis, divortii januæ, Instantiæ innuentes, polychrestæ, magicæ, etc.

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the highest degree. He has a pre-eminently practical, even an utilitarian mind, such as we meet with later in Bentham, and such as their business habits were to impress more and more upon the English. At the age of sixteen, while at the university, he was dissatisfied with Aristotle's philosophy,[5] not that he thought meanly of the author, whom, on the contrary, he calls a great genius; but because it seemed to him of no practical utility, incapable of producing works which might promote the well-being of men. We see that from the outset he struck upon his dominant idea; all else comes to him from this; a contempt for antecedent philosophy, the conception of a different system, the entire reformation of the sciences by the indication of a new goal, the definition of a distinct method, the opening up of unsuspected anticipations.[6] It is never speculation which he relishes, but the practical application of it. His eyes are turned not to heaven, but to earth; not to things abstract and vain, but to things palpable and solid; not to curious, but to profitable truths. He seeks to better the condition of men, to labor for the welfare of mankind, to enrich human life with new discoveries and new resources, to equip mankind with new powers and new instruments of action. His philosophy itself is but an instrument, *organum*, a sort of machine or lever constructed to enable the intellect to raise a weight, to break through obstacles, to open up vistas, to accomplish tasks, which had hitherto surpassed its power. In his eyes, every special science, like science in general, should be an implement. He invites mathematicians to quit their pure geometry, to study numbers only with a view to natural philosophy, to seek formulas only to calculate real quantities and natural motions. He recommends moralists to study the soul, the passions, habits, temptations, not merely in a speculative way, but with a view to the cure or diminution of vice, and assigns to the science of morals as its goal the amelioration of morals. For him, the object of science is always the establishment of an art; that is, the production of something of practical utility; when he wished to describe the efficacious nature of his philosophy by a tale, he delineated in the "New Atlantis," with a poet's boldness and the precision of a seer, almost employing the very terms in use now, modern applications, and

[5] "The Works of Francis Bacon," London, 1824, vol. vii. p. 2. "Latin Biography," by Rawley.

[6] This point is brought out by the review of Lord Macaulay. "Critical and Historical Essays," vol. iii.

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the present organization of the sciences, academies, observatories, air-balloons, submarine vessels, the improvement of land, the transmutation of species, regenerations, the discovery of remedies, the preservation of food. The end of our foundation, says his principal personage, is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible. And this " possible " is infinite.

How did this grand and just conception originate? Doubtless common-sense and genius, too, were necessary to its production; but neither common-sense nor genius was lacking to men: there had been more than one who, observing, like Bacon, the progress of particular industries, could, like him, have conceived of universal industry, and from certain limited ameliorations have advanced to unlimited amelioration. Here we see the power of connection; men think they do everything by their individual thought, and they can do nothing without the assistance of the thoughts of their neighbors; they fancy that they are following the small voice within them, but they only hear it because it is swelled by the thousand buzzing and imperious voices, which, issuing from all surrounding or distant circumstances, are confounded with it in an harmonious vibration. Generally they hear it, as Bacon did, from the first moment of reflection; but it had become inaudible among the opposing sounds which came from without to smother it. Could this confidence in the infinite enlargement of human power, this glorious idea of the universal conquest of nature, this firm hope in the continual increase of well-being and happiness, have germinated, grown, occupied an intelligence entirely, and thence have struck its roots, been propagated and spread over neighboring intelligences, in a time of discouragement and decay, when men believed the end of the world at hand, when things were falling into ruin about them, when Christian mysticism, as in the first centuries, ecclesiastical tyranny, as in the fourteenth century, were convincing them of their impotence, by perverting their intellectual efforts and curtailing their liberty. On the contrary, such hopes must then have seemed to be outbursts of pride, or suggestions of the carnal mind. They did seem so; and the last representatives of ancient science, and the first of the new, were exiled or imprisoned, assas-

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sinated or burned. In order to be developed an idea must be in harmony with surrounding civilization; before man can expect to attain the dominion over nature, or attempts to improve his condition, amelioration must have begun on all sides, industries have increased, knowledge have been accumulated, the arts expanded, a hundred thousand irrefutable witnesses must have come incessantly to give proof of his power and assurance of his progress. The "masculine birth of the time" (*temporis partus masculus*) is the title which Bacon applies to his work, and it is a true one. In fact, the whole age co-operated in it; by this creation it was finished. The consciousness of human power and prosperity gave to the Renaissance its first energy, its ideal, its poetic materials, its distinguishing features; and now it furnishes it with its final expression, its scientific doctrine, and its ultimate object.

We may add also, its method. For, the end of a journey once determined, the route is laid down, since the end always determines the route; when the point to be reached is changed, the path of approach is changed, and science, varying its object, varies also its method. So long as it limited its effort to the satisfying an idle curiosity, opening out speculative vistas, establishing a sort of opera in speculative minds, it could launch out any moment into metaphysical abstractions and distinctions: it was enough for it to skim over experience; it soon quitted it, and came all at once upon great words, quiddities, the principle of individuation, final causes. Half proofs sufficed science; at bottom it did not care to establish a truth, but to get an opinion; and its instrument, the syllogism, was serviceable only for refutations, not for discoveries; it took general laws for a starting-point instead of a point of arrival; instead of going to find them, it fancied them found. The syllogism was good in the schools, not in nature; it made disputants, not discoverers. From the moment that science had art for an end, and men studied in order to act, all was transformed; for we cannot act without certain and precise knowledge. Forces, before they can be employed, must be measured and verified; before we can build a house, we must know exactly the resistance of the beams, or the house will collapse; before we can cure a sick man, we must know with certainty the effect of a remedy, or the patient will die. Practice makes certainty and exactitude a necessity to

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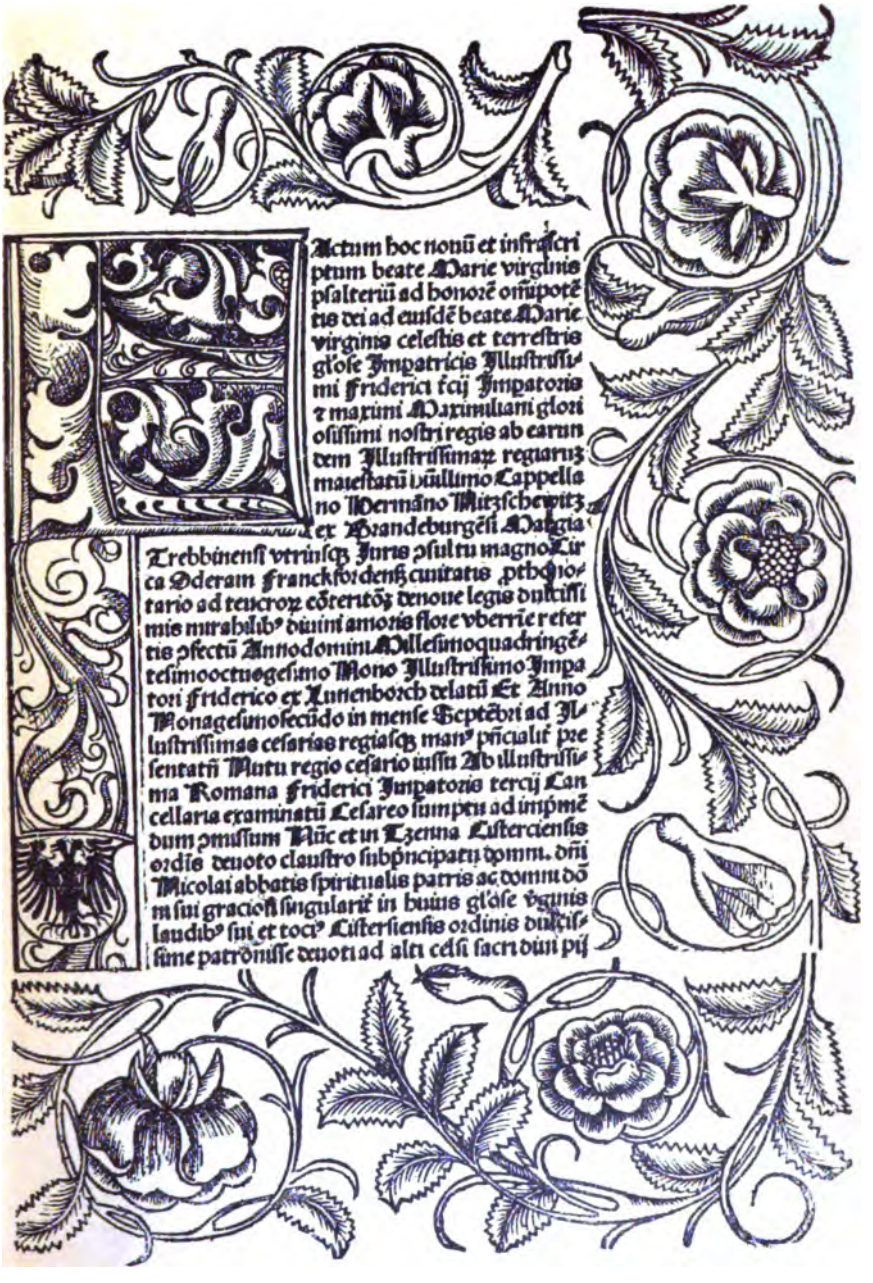

Actum hoc nouū et infrascri
ptum beate Marie virginis
psalteriū ad honorē omnipotē
tis dei ad eiusdē beate Marie
virginis celestis et terrestris
gl'ose Impatricis Illustrissi-
mi Friderici tercij Impatoris
ꝛ maximi Maximiliani glori
osissimi nostri regis ab earun
dem Illustrissimaꝝ regiarum
maiestatū hūillimo Cappella
no Hermāno Mitzschewitz
ex Brandeburgēsi Margia
Trebbinensi vtriusq; Iuris ꝯsultu magno Cir
ca Oderam Franckfordensis ciuitatis ꝓthono-
tario ad teucroꝝ cōteritōꝫ denoue legis dulcissi
mis mirabilib' diuini amoris flore vberrīe refer
tis ꝯfectū Anno domini Millesimoquadringē-
tesimooctuogesimo Nono Illustrissimo Impa
tori Friderico ex Lunenborch delatū Et Anno
Nonagesimosecūdo in mense Septēbri ad Il-
lustrissimas cesarias regiasq; man' p̄ncialit' pre
sentatū Nutu regio cesario iussu Ab illustrissi-
ma Romana Friderici Impatoris tercij Can
cellaria examinatū Cesareo sumptu ad imp̄mē
dum ꝯmissum Nūc et in Tzenna Cisterciensis
ordīs deuoto claustro subp̄ncipatu domni. dñi
Nicolai abbatis spiritualis patris ac domni dō
ni sui gracioſi singularit' in huius gl'ose v̄ginis
laudib' sui et toci' Cistersiensis ordinis dulcis-
sime patronisse deuoti ad alti celsi sacri diui pij

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science, because practice is impossible when it has nothing to lean upon but guesses and approximations. How can we eliminate guesses and approximations? How introduce into science, solidity and precision? We must imitate the cases in which science, issuing in practice, has proved to be precise and certain, and these cases are the industries. We must, as in the industries, observe, essay, grope about, verify, keep our mind fixed on sensible and particular things, advance to general rules only step by step; not anticipate experience, but follow it; not imagine nature, but interpret it. For every general effect, such as heat, whiteness, hardness, liquidity, we must seek a general condition, so that in producing the condition we may produce the effect. And for this it is necessary, by fit rejections and exclusions, to extract the condition sought from the heap of facts in which it lies buried, construct the table of cases from which the effect is absent, the table where it is present, the table where the effect is shown in various degrees, so as to isolate and bring to light the condition which produced it.[7] Then we shall have, not useless universal axioms, but efficacious mediate axioms, true laws from which we can derive works, and which are the sources of power in the same degree as the sources of light.[8] Bacon described and predicted in this modern science and industry, their correspondence, method, resources, principle; and after more than two centuries it is still to him that we go even at the present day to look for the theory of what we are attempting and doing.

Beyond this great view, he has discovered nothing. Cowley, one of his admirers, rightly said that, like Moses on Mount Pisgah, he was the first to announce the promised land; but he might have added quite as justly, that, like Moses, he did not enter there. He pointed out the route, but did not travel it; he taught men how to discover natural laws, but discovered none. His definition of heat is extremely imperfect. His "Natural History" is full of fanciful explanations.[9] Like the poets, he peoples nature with instincts and desires; attributes to bodies an actual voracity, to the atmosphere a thirst for light, sounds, odors, vapors which it drinks in; to metals a sort of haste to be incorporated with acids. He explains the duration of the bub-

[7] "Novum Organum," ii. 15 and 16.
[8] Ibid. i. i. 3.
[9] "Natural History," 800, 24, etc. "De Augmentis," iii. 1.

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bles of air which float on the surface of liquids, by supposing that air has a very small or no appetite for height. He sees in every quality, weight, ductility, hardness, a distinct essence which has its special cause; so that when a man knows the cause of every quality of gold, he will be able to put all these causes together, and make gold. In the main, with the alchemists, Paracelsus and Gilbert, Kepler himself, with all the men of his time, men of imagination, nourished on Aristotle, he represents nature as a compound of secret and living energies, inexplicable and primordial forces, distinct and indecomposable essences, adapted each by the will of the Creator to produce a distinct effect. He almost saw souls endowed with latent repugnances and occult inclinations, which aspire to or resist certain directions, certain mixtures, and certain localities. On this account also he confounds everything in his researches in an undistinguishable mass, vegetative and medicinal properties, mechanical and curative, physical and moral, without considering the most complex as depending on the simplest, but each on the contrary in itself, and taken apart, as an irreducible and independent existence. Obstinate in this error, the thinkers of the age mark time without advancing. They see clearly with Bacon the wide field of discovery, but they cannot enter upon it. They want an idea, and for want of this idea they do not advance. The disposition of mind which but now was a lever, is become an obstacle: it must be changed, that the obstacle may be got rid of. For ideas, I mean great and efficacious ones, do not come at will nor by chance, by the effort of an individual, or by a happy accident. Methods and philosophies, as well as literatures and religions, arise from the spirit of the age; and this spirit of the age makes them potent or powerless. One state of public intelligence excludes a certain kind of literature; another, a certain scientific conception. When it happens thus, writers and thinkers labor in vain, the literature is abortive, the conception does not make its appearance. In vain they turn one way and another, trying to remove the weight which hinders them; something stronger than themselves paralyzes their hands and frustrates their endeavors. The central pivot of the vast wheel on which human affairs move must be displaced one notch, that all may move with its motion. At this moment the pivot was moved, and thus a revolution of the great wheel begins, bringing round a new

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conception of nature, and in consequence that part of the method which was lacking. To the diviners, the creators, the comprehensive and impassioned minds who seized objects in a lump and in masses, succeeded the discursive thinkers, the systematic thinkers, the graduated and clear logicians, who, disposing ideas in continuous series, lead the hearer gradually from the simple to the most complex by easy and unbroken paths. Descartes superseded Bacon; the classical age obliterated the Renaissance; poetry and lofty imagination gave way before rhetoric, eloquence, and analysis. In this transformation of mind, ideas were transformed. Everything was drained dry and simplified. The universe, like all else, was reduced to two or three notions; and the conception of nature, which was poetical, became mechanical. Instead of souls, living forces, repugnances, and attractions, we have pulleys, levers, impelling forces. The world, which seemed a mass of instinctive powers, is now like a mere machinery of cog-wheels. Beneath this adventurous supposition lies a large and certain truth; that there is, namely, a scale of facts, some at the summit very complex, others at the base very simple; those above having their origin in those below, so that the lower ones explain the higher; and that we must seek the primary laws of things in the laws of motion. The search was made, and Galileo found them. Thenceforth the work of the Renaissance, outstripping the extreme point to which Bacon had pushed it, and at which he had left it, was able to proceed onward by itself, and did so proceed, without limit.

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CHAPTER SECOND

THE THEATRE

WE must look at this world more closely, and beneath the ideas which are developed seek for the living men; it is the theatre especially which is the original product of the English Renaissance, and it is the theatre especially which will exhibit the men of the English Renaissance. Forty poets, amongst them ten of superior rank, as well as one, the greatest of all artists who have represented the soul in words; many hundreds of pieces, and nearly fifty masterpieces; the drama extended over all the provinces of history, imagination, and fancy —expanded so as to embrace comedy, tragedy, pastoral and fanciful literature—to represent all degrees of human condition, and all the caprices of human invention—to express all the perceptible details of actual truth, and all the philosophic grandeur of general reflection; the stage disencumbered of all precept and freed from all imitation, given up and appropriated in the minutest particulars to the reigning taste and public intelligence; all this was a vast and manifold work, capable by its flexibility, its greatness, and its form, of receiving and preserving the exact imprint of the age and of the nation.[1]

Section I.—The Public and the Stage

Let us try, then, to set before our eyes this public, this audience, and this stage—all connected with one another, as in every natural and living work; and if ever there was a living and natural work, it is here. There were already seven theatres in London, in Shakespeare's time, so brisk and universal was the taste for dramatic representations. Great and rude contrivances, awkward in their construction, barbarous in their appointments; but a fervid imagination readily supplied all that they

[1] "The very age and body of the time, his form and pressure."—Shakespeare.

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lacked, and hardy bodies endured all inconveniences without difficulty. On a dirty site, on the banks of the Thames, rose the principal theatre, the Globe, a sort of hexagonal tower, surrounded by a muddy ditch, on which was hoisted a red flag. The common people could enter as well as the rich: there were sixpenny, twopenny, even penny seats; but they could not see it without money. If it rained, and it often rains in London, the people in the pit, butchers, mercers, bakers, sailors, apprentices, receive the streaming rain upon their heads. I suppose they did not trouble themselves about it; it was not so long since they began to pave the streets of London; and when men, like these, have had experience of sewers and puddles, they are not afraid of catching cold. While waiting for the piece, they amuse themselves after their fashion, drink beer, crack nuts, eat fruit, howl, and now and then resort to their fists; they have been known to fall upon the actors, and turn the theatre upside down. At other times they were dissatisfied and went to the tavern to give the poet a hiding, or toss him in a blanket; they were coarse fellows, and there was no month when the cry of "Clubs" did not call them out of their shops to exercise their brawny arms. When the beer took effect, there was a great upturned barrel in the pit, a peculiar receptacle for general use. The smell rises, and then comes the cry, "Burn the juniper!" They burn some in a plate on the stage, and the heavy smoke fills the air. Certainly the folk there assembled could scarcely get disgusted at anything, and cannot have had sensitive noses. In the time of Rabelais there was not much cleanliness to speak of. Remember that they were hardly out of the Middle Ages and that in the Middle Ages man lived on a dunghill.

Above them, on the stage, were the spectators able to pay a shilling, the elegant people, the gentlefolk. These were sheltered from the rain, and if they chose to pay an extra shilling, could have a stool. To this were reduced the prerogatives of rank and the devices of comfort: it often happened that there were not stools enough; then they lie down on the ground: this was not a time to be dainty. They play cards, smoke, insult the pit, who gave it them back without stinting, and throw apples at them into the bargain. They also gesticulate, swear in Italian, French, English;[1] crack aloud jokes in dainty, composite, high-

[1] Ben Jonson, "Every Man in his Humour"; "Cynthia's Revels."

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colored words: in short, they have the energetic, original, gay manners of artists, the same humor, the same absence of constraint, and, to complete the resemblance, the same desire to make themselves singular, the same imaginative cravings, the same absurd and picturesque devices, beards cut to a point, into the shape of a fan, a spade, the letter T, gaudy and expensive dresses, copied from five or six neighboring nations, embroidered, laced with gold, motley, continually heightened in effect or changed for others: there was, as it were, a carnival in their brains as well as on their backs.

With such spectators illusions could be produced without much trouble: there were no preparations or perspectives; few or no movable scenes: their imaginations took all this upon them. A scroll in big letters announced to the public that they were in London or Constantinople; and that was enough to carry the public to the desired place. There was no trouble about probability. Sir Philip Sidney writes:

"You shall have Asia of the one side, and Africke of the other, and so many other under-kingdomes, that the Plaier when hee comes in, must ever begin with telling where hee is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three Ladies walke to gather flowers, and then wee must beleeve the stage to be a garden. By and by wee heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a rocke; . . . while in the meane time two armies flie in, represented with foure swordes and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberall. For ordinary it is, that two young Princes fall in love, after many traverses, shee is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy, hee is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe; and all this in two hours space." [2]

Doubtless these enormities were somewhat reduced under Shakespeare; with a few hangings, crude representations of animals, towers, forests, they assisted somewhat the public imagination. But after all, in Shakespeare's plays, as in all others, the imagination from within is chiefly drawn upon for the machinery; it must lend itself to all, substitute all, accept for a queen a young man who has just been shaved, endure in one act ten changes of place, leap suddenly over twenty years or five hundred miles,[3] take half a dozen supernumeraries for forty

[2] "The Defence of Poesie," ed. 1629, p. 562.

[3] "Winter's Tale," "Cymbeline," "Julius Cæsar."

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thousand men, and to have represented by the rolling of the drums all the battles of Cæsar, Henry V, Coriolanus, Richard III. And imagination, being so overflowing and so young, accepts all this. Recall your own youth; for my part, the deepest emotions I have ever felt at a theatre were given to me by a strolling bevy of four young girls, playing comedy and tragedy on a stage in a coffee-house; true, I was eleven years old. So in this theatre, at this moment, their souls were fresh, as ready to feel everything as the poet was to dare everything.

Section II.—Manners of the Sixteenth Century

These are but externals; let us try to advance further, to observe the passions, the bent of mind, the inner man: it is this inner state which raised and modelled the drama, as everything else; invisible inclinations are everywhere the cause of visible works, and the interior shapes the exterior. What are these townspeople, courtiers, this public, whose taste fashions the theatre? what is there peculiar in the structure and condition of their minds? The condition must needs be peculiar; for the drama flourishes all of a sudden, and for sixty years together, with marvellous luxuriance, and at the end of this time is arrested so that no effort could ever revive it. The structure must be peculiar; for of all theatres, old and new, this is distinct in form, and displays a style, action, characters, an idea of life, which are not found in any age or any country beside. This particular feature is the free and complete expansion of nature.

What we call nature in men is, man such as he was before culture and civilization had deformed and reformed him. Almost always, when a new generation arrives at manhood and consciousness, it finds a code of precepts impose on it with all the weight and authority of antiquity. A hundred kinds of chains, a hundred thousand kinds of ties, religion, morality, good breeding, every legislation which regulates sentiments, morals, manners, fetter and tame the creature of impulse and passion which breathes and frets within each of us. There is nothing like that here. It is a regeneration, and the curb of the past is wanting to the present. Catholicism, reduced to external ceremony and clerical chicanery, had just ended; Protestantism, arrested in its

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first gropings after truth, or straying into sects, had not yet gained the mastery; the religion of discipline was grown feeble, and the religion of morals was not yet established; men ceased to listen to the directions of the clergy, and has not yet spelled out the law of conscience. The church was turned into an assembly-room, as in Italy; the young fellows came to St. Paul's to walk, laugh, chatter, display their new cloaks; the thing had even passed into a custom. They paid for the noise they made with their spurs, and this tax was a source of income to the canons;[1] pickpockets, loose girls, came there by crowds; these latter struck their bargains while service was going on. Imagine, in short, that the scruples of conscience and the severity of the Puritans were at that time odious and ridiculed on the stage, and judge of the difference between this sensual, unbridled England, and the correct, disciplined, stiff England of our own time. Ecclesiastical or secular, we find no signs of rule. In the failure of faith, reason had not gained sway, and opinion is as void of authority as tradition. The imbecile age, which has just ended, continues buried in scorn, with its ravings, its verse-makers, and its pedantic text-books; and out of the liberal opinions derived from antiquity, from Italy, France, and Spain, everyone could pick and choose as it pleased him, without stooping to restraint or acknowledging a superiority. There was no model imposed on them, as nowadays; instead of affecting imitation, they affected originality.[2] Each strove to be himself, with his own oaths, peculiar ways, costumes, his specialties of conduct and humor, and to be unlike everyone else. They said not, "So and so is done," but "I do so and so." Instead of restraining, they gave free vent to themselves. There was no etiquette of society; save for an exaggerated jargon of chivalresque courtesy, they are masters of speech and action on the impulse of the moment. You will find them free from decorum, as of all else. In

[1] Strype, in his "Annals of the Reformation" (1571), says: "Many now were wholly departed from the communion of the church, and came no more to hear divine service in their parish churches, nor received the holy sacrament, according to the laws of the realm." Richard Baxter, in his "Life," published in 1696, says: "We lived in a country that had but little preaching at all. . . . In the village where I lived the Reader read the Common Prayer briefly; and the rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except Eating time, was spent in Dancing under a Maypole and a great tree, not far from my father's door, where all the Town did meet together. And though one of my father's own Tenants was the piper, he could not restrain him nor break the sport. So that we could not read the Scripture in our family without the great disturbance of the Taber and Pipe and noise in the street."

[2] Ben Jonson, "Every Man in his Humour."

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this outbreak and absence of fetters, they resemble fine strong horses let loose in the meadow. Their inborn instincts have not been tamed, nor muzzled, nor diminished.

On the contrary, they have been preserved intact by bodily and military training; and escaping as they were from barbarism, not from civilization, they had not been acted upon by the innate softening and hereditary tempering which are new transmitted with the blood, and civilize a man from the moment of his birth. This is why man, who for three centuries has been a domestic animal, was still almost a savage beast, and the force of his muscles and the strength of his nerves increased the boldness and energy of his passions. Look at these uncultivated men, men of the people, how suddenly the blood warms and rises to their face; their fists double, their lips press together, and those vigorous bodies rush at once into action. The courtiers of that age were like our men of the people. They had the same taste for the exercise of their limbs, the same indifference toward the inclemencies of the weather, the same coarseness of language, the same undisguised sensuality. They were carmen in body and gentlemen in sentiment, with the dress of actors and the tastes of artists. "At fourtene," says John Hardyng, "a lordes sonnes shalle to felde hunte the dere, and catch an hardynesse. For dere to hunte and slea, and see them blede, ane hardyment gyffith to his courage. . . . At sextene yere, to werray and to wage, to juste and ryde, and castels to assayle . . . and every day his armure to assay in fete of armes with some of his meyne."[3] When ripened to manhood, he is employed with the bow, in wrestling, leaping, vaulting. Henry VIII's court, in its noisy merriment, was like a village fair. The king, says Holinshed, exercised himself "dailie in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, casting of the barre, plaieing at the recorders, flute, virginals, in setting of songs, and making of ballads." He leaps the moats with a pole, and was once within an ace of being killed. He is so fond of wrestling, that publicly, on the field of the Cloth of Gold, he seized Francis I in his arms to try a throw with him. This is how a common soldier or a bricklayer nowadays tries a new comrade. In fact, they regarded gross jests and brutal buffooneries as amusements, as soldiers and bricklayers do now. In every nobleman's house

[3] "The Chronicle" of John Hardyng (1436), ed. H. Ellis, 1812, Preface.

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there was a fool, whose business it was to utter pointed jests, to make eccentric gestures, horrible faces, to sing licentious songs, as we might hear now in a beer-house. They thought insults and obscenity a joke. They were foul-mouthed, they listened to Rabelais's words undiluted, and delighted in conversation which would revolt us. They had no respect for humanity; the rules of proprieties and the habits of good breeding began only under Louis XIV, and by imitation of the French; at this time they all blurted out the word that fitted in, and that was most frequently a coarse word. You will see on the stage, in Shakespeare's "Pericles," the filth of a haunt of vice.[4] The great lords, the well-dressed ladies, speak billingsgate. When Henry V pays his court to Catherine of France, it is with the coarse bearing of a sailor who may have taken a fancy to a sutler; and like the tars who tattoo a heart on their arms to prove their love for the girls they left behind them, there were men who "devoured sulphur and drank urine"[5] to win their mistress by a proof of affection. Humanity is as much lacking as decency.[6] Blood, suffering, does not move them. The court frequents bear and bull baitings, where dogs are ripped up and chained beasts are sometimes beaten to death, and it was, says an officer of the palace, "a charming entertainment."[7] No wonder they used their arms like clodhoppers and gossips. Elizabeth used to beat her maids of honor, "so that these beautiful girls could often be heard crying and lamenting in a piteous manner." One day she spat upon Sir Mathew's fringed coat; at another time, when Essex, whom she was scolding, turned his back, she gave him a box on the ear. It was then the practice of great ladies to beat their children and their servants. Poor Jane Grey was sometimes so wretchedly "boxed, struck, pinched, and ill-treated in

[4] Act iv. sc. 2 and 4. See also the character of Calypso in Massinger; Putana in Ford; Protalyce in Beaumont and Fletcher.

[5] Middleton, "Dutch Courtezan."

[6] Commission given by Henry VIII to the Earl of Hertford, 1544: "You are there to put all to fire and sword; to burn Edinburgh town, and to raze and deface it, when you have sacked it, and gotten what you can out of it. . . . Do what you can out of hand, and without long tarrying, to beat down and overthrow the castle, sack Holyrood-House, and as many towns and villages about Edinburgh as ye conveniently can; sack Leith, and burn and subvert it, and all the rest, putting man, woman, and child to fire and sword, without exception, when any resistance shall be made against you; and this done, pass over to the Fife land, and extend like extremities and destructions in all towns and villages whereunto ye may reach conveniently, not forgetting amongst all the rest, so to spoil and turn upside down the cardinal's town of St. Andrew's, as the upper stone may be the nether, and not one stick stand by another, sparing no creature alive within the same, specially such as either in friendship or blood be allied to the cardinal. This journey shall succeed most to his majesty's honour."

[7] Laneham, "A Goodly Relief."

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other manners which she dare not relate," that she used to wish herself dead. Their first idea is to come to words, to blows, to have satisfaction. As in feudal times, they appeal at once to arms, and retain the habit of taking the law in their own hands, and without delay. "On Thursday laste," writes Gilbert Talbot to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, "as my Lorde Rytche was rydynge in the streates, there was one Wyndam that stode in a dore, and shotte a dagge at him, thynkynge to have slayne him. . . . The same daye, also, as Sr John Conway was goynge in the streetes, M^r^. Lodovyke Grevell came sodenly upon him, and stroke him on the hedd wth a sworde. . . . I am forced to trouble yor Honors wth thes tryflynge matters, for I know no greater."[8] No one, not even the queen, is safe among these violent dispositions.[9] Again, when one man struck another in the precincts of the court, his hand was cut off, and the arteries stopped with a red-hot iron. Only such atrocious imitations of their own crimes, and the painful image of bleeding and suffering flesh, could tame their vehemence and restrain the uprising of their instincts. Judge now what materials they furnish to the theatre, and what characters they look for at the theatre. To please the public, the stage cannot deal too much in open lust and the strongest passions; it must depict man attaining the limit of his desires, unchecked, almost mad, now trembling and rooted before the white palpitating flesh which his eyes devour, now haggard and grinding his teeth before the enemy whom he wishes to tear to pieces, now carried beyond himself and overwhelmed at the sight of the honors and wealth which he covets, always raging and enveloped in a tempest of eddying ideas, sometimes shaken by impetuous joy, more often on the verge of fury and madness, stronger, more ardent, more daringly let loose to infringe on reason and law than ever. We hear from the stage as from the history of the time, these fierce murmurs: the sixteenth century is like a den of lions.

Amid passions so strong as these there is not one lacking. Nature appears here in all its violence, but also in all its fulness. If nothing had been weakened, nothing had been mutilated. It is the entire man who is displayed, heart, mind, body, senses,

[8] February 13, 1587. Nathan Drake, "Shakspeare and his Times," ii. p. 165. See also the same work for all these details.

[9] Essex, when struck by the queen, put his hand on the hilt of his sword.

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with his noblest and finest aspirations, as with his most bestial and savage appetites, without the preponderance of any dominant circumstance to cast him altogether in one direction, to exalt or degrade him. He has not become rigid, as he will be under Puritanism. He is not uncrowned as in the Restoration. After the hollowness and weariness of the fifteenth century, he rose up by a second birth, as before in Greece man had risen by a first birth; and now, as then, the temptations of the outer world came combined to raise his faculties from their sloth and torpor. A sort of generous warmth spread over them to ripen and make them flourish. Peace, prosperity, comfort began; new industries and increasing activity suddenly multiplied objects of utility and luxury tenfold. America and India, by their discovery, caused the treasures and prodigies heaped up afar over distant seas to shine before their eyes; antiquity rediscovered, sciences mapped out, the Reformation begun, books multiplied by printing, ideas by books, doubled the means of enjoyment, imagination, and thought. People wanted to enjoy, to imagine, and to think; for the desire grows with the attraction, and here all attractions were combined. There were attractions for the senses, in the chambers which they began to warm, in the beds newly furnished with pillows, in the coaches which they began to use for the first time. There were attractions for the imagination in the new palaces, arranged after the Italian manner; in the variegated hangings from Flanders; in the rich garments, gold-embroidered, which, being continually changed, combined the fancies and the splendors of all Europe. There were attractions for the mind, in the noble and beautiful writings which, spread abroad, translated, explained, brought in philosophy, eloquence, and poetry, from restored antiquity, and from the surrounding renaissances. Under this appeal all aptitudes and instincts at once started up; the low and the lofty, ideal and sensual love, gross cupidity and pure generosity. Recall what you yourself experienced, when from being a child you became a man: what wishes for happiness, what breadth of anticipation, what intoxication of heart wafted you towards all joys; with what impulse your hands seized involuntarily and all at once every branch of the tree, and would not let a single fruit escape. At sixteen years, like Chérubin,[10] we wish for a servant girl

[10] A page in the "Mariage de Figaro," a comedy by Beaumarchais.—Tr.

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while we adore a Madonna; we are capable of every species of covetousness, and also of every species of self-denial; we find virtue more lovely, our meals more enjoyable; pleasure has more zest, heroism more worth: there is no allurement which is not keen; the sweetness and novelty of things are too strong; and in the hive of passions which buzzes within us, and stings us like the sting of a bee, we can do nothing but plunge, one after another, in all directions. Such were the men of this time, Raleigh, Essex, Elizabeth, Henry VIII himself, excessive and inconstant, ready for devotion and for crime, violent in good and evil, heroic with strange weaknesses, humble with sudden changes of mood, never vile with premeditation like the roisterers of the Restoration, never rigid on principle like the Puritans of the Revolution, capable of weeping like children,[11] and of dying like men, often base courtiers, more than once true knights, displaying constantly, amidst all these contradictions of bearing, only the fulness of their characters. Thus prepared, they could take in everything, sanguinary ferocity and refined generosity, the brutality of shameless debauchery, and the most divine innocence of love, accept all the characters, prostitutes and virgins, princes and mountebanks, pass quickly from trivial buffoonery to lyrical sublimities, listen alternately to the quibbles of clowns and the songs of lovers. The drama even, in order to imitate and satisfy the fertility of their nature, must talk all tongues, pompous, inflated verse, loaded with imagery, and side by side with this, vulgar prose: more, it must distort its natural style and limits; put songs, poetical devices, into the discourse of courtiers and the speeches of statesmen; bring on the stage the fairy world of the opera, as Middleton says, gnomes, nymphs of the land and sea, with their groves and their meadows; compel the gods to descend upon the stage, and hell itself to furnish its world of marvels. No other theatre is so complicated; for nowhere else do we find men so complete.

[11] The great Chancellor Burleigh often wept, so harshly was he used by Elizabeth.

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Section III.—Some Aspects of the English Mind

In this free and universal expansion, the passions had their special bent withal, which was an English one, inasmuch as they were English. After all, in every age, under every civilization, a people is always itself. Whatever be its dress, goat-skin blouse, gold-laced doublet, black dress-coat, the five or six great instincts which it possessed in its forests, follow it in its palaces and offices. To this day, warlike passions, a gloomy humor, subsist under the regularity and propriety of modern manners.[1] Their native energy and harshness pierce through the perfection of culture and the habits of comfort. Rich young men, on leaving Oxford, go to hunt bears on the Rocky Mountains, the elephant in South Africa, live under canvas, box, jump hedges on horseback, sail their yachts on dangerous coasts, delight in solitude and peril. The ancient Saxon, the old rover of the Scandinavian seas, has not perished. Even at school the children roughly treat one another, withstand one another, fight like men; and their character is so indomitable that they need the birch and blows to reduce them to the discipline of law. Judge what they were in the sixteenth century; the English race passed then for the most warlike of Europe, the most redoubtable in battle, the most impatient of anything like slavery.[2] "English savages" is what Cellini calls them; and the "great shins of beef" with which they fill themselves, keep up the force and ferocity of their instincts. To harden them thoroughly, institutions work in the same groove with nature. The nation is armed, every man is brought up like a soldier, bound to have arms according to his condition, to exercise himself on Sundays or holidays; from the yeoman to the lord, the old military constitution keeps them enrolled and ready for action.[3] In a state which resembles an army it is necessary that punishments, as in an army, shall inspire terror; and to make them worse, the hideous Wars of the Roses, which on every flaw of the succession to the throne are ready to break out again, are ever present in their

[1] Compare, to understand this character, the parts assigned to James Harlowe by Richardson, old Osborne by Thackeray, Sir Giles Overreach by Massinger, and Manly by Wycherley.

[2] Hentzner's "Travels"; Benvenuto Cellini. See passim, the costumes printed in Venice and Germany: "Bellicosissimi." Froude, i. pp. 19, 52.

[3] This is not so true of the English now, if it was in the sixteenth century, as it is of Continental nations. The French lycées are far more military in character than English schools.—Tr.

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recollection. Such instincts, such a constitution, such a history, raise before them, with tragic severity, an idea of life: death is at hand, as well as wounds, the block, tortures. The fine cloaks of purple which the renaissances of the South displayed joyfully in the sun, to wear like a holiday garment, are here stained with blood, and edged with black. Throughout,[4] a stern discipline, and the axe ready for every suspicion of treason; great men, bishops, a chancellor, princes, the king's relatives, queens, a protector, all kneeling in the straw, sprinkled the Tower with their blood; one after the other they marched past, stretched out their necks; the Duke of Buckingham, Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Catherine Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Admiral Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, Lady Jane Grey and her husband, the Duke of Northumberland, Mary Stuart, the Earl of Essex, all on the throne, or on the steps of the throne, in the highest rank of honors, beauty, youth, and genius; of the bright procession nothing is left but senseless trunks, marred by the tender mercies of the executioner. Shall I count the funeral pyres, the hangings, living men cut down from the gibbet, disembowelled, quartered,[5] their limbs cast into the fire, their heads exposed on the walls? There is a page in Holinshed which reads like a death register:

"The five and twentith daie of Maie (1535), was in saint Paules church at London examined nineteene men and six women born in Holland, whose opinions were (heretical). Fourteene of them were condemned, a man and a woman of them were burned in Smithfield, the other twelve were sent to other townes, there to be burnt. On the nineteenth of June were three moonkes of the Charterhouse hanged, drawne, and quartered at Tiburne, and their heads and quarters set up about London, for denieng the king to be supreme head of the church. Also the one and twentith of the same moneth, and for the same cause, doctor John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, was beheaded for denieng of the supremacie, and his head set upon London bridge, but his bodie buried within Barking churchyard. The pope had elected him a cardinall, and sent his hat as far as Calais, but his head was off before his hat was on: so that they met not. On the sixt of Julie, was Sir Thomas Moore beheaded for the like crime, that is to wit, for denieng the king to be supreme head." [6]

[4] Froude's "History of England," vols. i. ii. iii.

[5] "When his heart was torn out he uttered a deep groan."—"Execution of Parry;" Strype, iii. 251.

[6] Holinshed, "Chronicles of England," iii. p. 793.

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None of these murders seem extraordinary; the chroniclers mention them without growing indignant; the condemned go quietly to the block, as if the thing were perfectly natural. Anne Boleyn said seriously, before giving up her head to the executioner: "I praie God save the king, and send him long to reigne over you, for a gentler, nor a more merciful prince was there never."[7] Society is, as it were, in a state of siege, so incited that beneath the idea of order everyone entertained the idea of the scaffold. They saw it, the terrible machine, planted on all the highways of human life; and the byways as well as the highways led to it. A sort of martial law, introduced by conquests into civil affairs, entered thence into ecclesiastical matters,[8] and social economy ended by being enslaved by it. As in a camp,[9] expenditure, dress, the food of each class, are fixed and restricted; no one might stray out of his district, be idle, live after his own devices. Every stranger was seized, interrogated; if he could not give a good account of himself, the parish-stocks bruised his limbs; as in time of war he would have passed for a spy and an enemy, if caught amidst the army. Any person, says the law,[10] found living idly or loiteringly for the space of three days, shall be marked with a hot iron on his breast, and adjudged as a slave to the man who shall inform against him. This one "shall take the same slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and refuse meat, and cause him to work, by beating, chaining, or otherwise, in such work and labour as he shall put him to, be it never so vile." He may sell him, bequeath him, let him out for hire, or trade upon him "after the like sort as they may do of any other their moveable goods or chattels," put a ring of iron about his neck or leg; if he runs away and absents himself for fourteen days, he is branded on the forehead with a hot iron, and remains a slave for the whole of his life; if he runs away a second time, he is put to death. Sometimes, says More, you might see a score of thieves hung on the same gibbet. In one year[11] forty persons were put to death in the county of Somerset alone, and in each county there were three or four hundred vagabonds who would sometimes gather together and rob in armed bands of sixty at a time. Follow the whole of this history closely, the fires of Mary, the pillories of Elizabeth, and it is plain that the

[7] Holinshed, "Chronicles of England," iii. p. 797.
[8] Under Henry IV and Henry V.
[9] Froude, i. 15.
[10] In 1547.
[11] In 1596.

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moral tone of the land, like its physical condition, is harsh by comparison with other countries. They have no relish in their enjoyments, as in Italy; what is called Merry England is England given up to animal spirits, a coarse animation produced by abundant feeding, continued prosperity, courage, and self-reliance; voluptuousness does not exist in this climate and this race. Mingled with the beautiful popular beliefs, the lugubrious dreams and the cruel nightmare of witchcraft make their appearance. Bishop Jewell, preaching before the queen, tells her that witches and sorcerers within these last few years are marvellously increased. Some ministers assert

"That they have had in their parish at one instant xvij or xviij witches; meaning such as could worke miracles supernaturallie; that they work spells by which men pine away even unto death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft; that instructed by the devil, they make ointments of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the aire, and accomplish all their desires. When a child is not baptized, or defended by the sign of the cross, then the witches catch them from their mothers sides in the night, . . . kill them . . . or after buriall steale them out of their graves, and seeth them in a caldron, untill their flesh be made potable. . . . It is an infallible rule, that everie fortnight, or at the least everie moneth, each witch must kill one child at the least for hir part."

Here was something to make the teeth chatter with fright. Add to this revolting and absurd descriptions, wretched tomfooleries, details about the infernal caldron, all the nastinesses which could haunt the trite imagination of a hideous and drivelling old woman, and you have the spectacles, provided by Middleton and Shakespeare, and which suit the sentiments of the age and the national humor. The fundamental gloom pierces through the glow and rapture of poetry. Mournful legends have multiplied; every churchyard has its ghost; wherever a man has been murdered his spirit appears. Many people dare not leave their village after sunset. In the evening, before bed-time, men talk of the coach which is seen drawn by headless horses, with headless postilions and coachmen, or of unhappy spirits who, compelled to inhabit the plain, under the sharp northeast wind, pray for the shelter of a hedge or a valley. They dream terribly of death:

"To die and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;

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This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thr'lling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!" [12]

The greatest speak with a sad resignation of the infinite obscurity which embraces our poor, short, glimmering life, our life, which is but a troubled dream; [13] the sad state of humanity, which is but passion, madness, and sorrow; the human being who is himself, perhaps, but a vain phantom, a grievous sick man's dream. In their eyes we roll down a fatal slope, where chance dashes us one against the other, and the inner destiny which urges us onward, only shatters after it has blinded us. And at the end of all is "the silent grave, no conversation, no joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers, no careful father's counsel; nothing's heard, nor nothing is, but all oblivion, dust, and endless darkness." [14] If yet there were nothing. "To die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream." To dream sadly, to fall into a nightmare like the nightmare of life, like that in which we are struggling and crying to-day, gasping with hoarse throat!—this is their idea of man and of existence, the national idea, which fills the stage with calamities and despair, which makes a display of tortures and massacres, which abounds in madness and crime, which holds up death as the issue throughout. A threatening and sombre fog veils their mind like their sky, and joy, like the sun, only appears in its full force now and then. They are different from the Latin race, and in the common Renaissance they are regenerated otherwise than the Latin races. The free and full development of pure nature which, in Greece and Italy, ends in the painting of beauty and happy energy, ends here in the painting of ferocious energy, agony, and death.

[12] Shakespeare, "Measure for Measure," Act iii. 1. See also "The Tempest," "Hamlet," "Macbeth."

[13] "We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."—"Tempest," iv. 1.

[14] Beaumont and Fletcher, "Thierry and Theodoret," Act iv. 1.

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Section IV.—The Poets of the Period

Thus was this theatre produced; a theatre unique in history, like the admirable and fleeting epoch from which it sprang, the work and the picture of this young world, as natural, as unshackled, and as tragic as itself. When an original and national drama springs up, the poets who establish it carry in themselves the sentiments which it represents. They display better than other men the feelings of the public, because those feelings are stronger in them than in other men. The passions which surround them, break forth in their heart with a harsher or a juster cry, and hence their voices become the voices of all. Chivalric and Catholic Spain had her interpreters in her enthusiasts and her Don Quixotes: in Calderon, first a soldier, afterwards a priest; in Lope de Vega, a volunteer at fifteen, a passionate lover, a wandering duelist, a soldier of the Armada, finally, a priest and familiar of the Holy Office; so full of fervor that he fasts till he is exhausted, faints with emotion while singing mass, and in his flagellations stains the walls of his cell with blood. Calm and noble Greece had in her principal tragic poet one of the most accomplished and fortunate of her sons:[1] Sophocles, first in song and palæstra; who at fifteen sang, unclad, the pæan before the trophy of Salamis, and who afterwards, as ambassador, general, ever loving the gods and impassioned for his state, presented, in his life as in his works, the spectacle of the incomparable harmony which made the beauty of the ancient world, and which the modern world will never more attain to. Eloquent and worldly France, in the age which carried the art of good manners and conversation to its highest pitch, finds, to write her oratorical tragedies and to paint her drawing-room passions, the most able craftsman of words, Racine, a courtier, a man of the world; the most capable, by the delicacy of his tact and the adaptation of his style, of making men of the world and courtiers speak. So in England the poets are in harmony with their works. Almost all are Bohemians; they sprang from the people,[2] were educated, and usually studied at Oxford or Cambridge, but they were poor, so that their education contrasts with

[1] Διεσαφήθη δ' ἐν παισὶ καὶ περὶ παλαίστραν . . . φιλαθηναιότατος καὶ θεοφιλής. — Scholiast.

[2] Except Beaumont and Fletcher

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their condition. Ben Jonson is the step-son of a bricklayer, and himself a bricklayer; Marlowe is the son of a shoemaker; Shakespeare of a wool merchant; Massinger of a servant of a noble family.[8] They live as they can, get into debt, write for their bread, go on the stage. Peele, Lodge, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, Heywood, are actors; most of the details which we have of their lives are taken from the journal of Henslowe, a retired pawnbroker, later a money-lender and manager of a theatre, who gives them work, advances money to them, receives their manuscripts or their wardrobes as security. For a play he gives seven or eight pounds; after the year 1600 prices rise, and reach as high as twenty or twenty-five pounds. It is clear that, even after this increase, the trade of author scarcely brings in bread. In order to earn money, it was necessary, like Shakespeare, to become a manager, to try to have a share in the property of a theatre; but such success is rare, and the life which they lead, a life of actors and artists, improvident, full of excess, lost amid debauchery and acts of violence, amidst women of evil fame, in contact with young profligates, among the temptations of misery, imagination and license, generally leads them to exhaustion, poverty, and death. Men received enjoyment from them, but neglected and despised them. One actor, for a political allusion, was sent to prison, and only just escaped losing his ears; great men, men in office, abused them like servants. Heywood, who played almost every day, bound himself, in addition, to write a sheet daily, for several years composes at haphazard in taverns, labors and sweats like a true literary hack, and dies leaving two hundred and twenty pieces, of which most are lost. Kyd, one of the earliest in date, died in misery. Shirley, one of the last, at the end of his career, was obliged to become once more a schoolmaster. Massinger dies unknown; and in the parish register we find only this sad mention of him: "Philip Massinger, a stranger." A few months after the death of Middleton, his widow was obliged to ask alms of the City, because he had left nothing. Imagination, as Drummond said of Ben Jonson, oppressed their reason; it is the common failing of poets. They wish to enjoy, and give themselves wholly up to

[8] Hartley Coleridge, in his "Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford," says of Massinger's father: "We are not certified of the situation which he held in the noble household (Earl of Pembroke), but we may be sure that it was neither menial nor mean. Service in those days was not derogatory to gentle birth."—Tr.

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enjoyment; their mood, their heart governs them; in their life, as in their works, impulses are irresistible; desire comes suddenly, like a wave, drowning reason, resistance—often even giving neither reason nor resistance time to show themselves.[4] Many are roisterers, sad roisterers of the same sort, such as Musset and Murger, who give themselves up to every passion, and "drown their sorrows in the bowl"; capable of the purest and most poetic dreams, of the most delicate and touching tenderness, and who yet can only undermine their health and mar their fame. Such are Nash, Decker, and Greene; Nash, a fantastic satirist, who abused his talent, and conspired like a prodigal against good fortune; Decker, who passed three years in the King's Bench prison; Greene, above all, a pleasing wit, copious, graceful, who took a delight in destroying himself, publicly with tears confessing his vices,[5] and the next moment plunging into them again. These are mere androgynes, true courtesans, in manners, body, and heart. Quitting Cambridge, "with good fellows as free-living as himself," Greene had travelled over Spain, Italy, "in which places he sawe and practizde such villainie as is abhominable to declare." You see the poor man is candid, not sparing himself; he is natural; passionate in everything, repentance or otherwise; above all of ever-varying mood; made for self-contradiction; not self-correction. On his return he became, in London, a supporter of taverns, a haunter of evil places. In his "Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance" he says:

"I was dround in pride, whoredom was my daily exercise, and gluttony with drunkenness was my onely delight. . . . After I had wholly betaken me to the penning of plaies (which was my continuall exercise) I was so far from calling upon God that I sildome thought on God, but tooke such delight in swearing and blaspheming the name of God that none could thinke otherwise of me than that I was the child of perdition. These vanities and other trifling pamphlets I penned of love and vaine fantasies was my chiefest stay of living; and for those my vaine discourses I was beloved of the more vainer sort of people, who being my continuall companions, came still to my lodging, and there

[4] See, amongst others, "The Woman Killed with Kindness," by Heywood. Mrs. Frankfort, so upright of heart, accepts Wendoll at his first offer. Sir Francis Acton, at the sight of her whom he wishes to dishonor, and whom he hates, falls "into an ecstasy," and dreams of nothing save marriage. Compare the sudden transport of Juliet, Romeo, Macbeth, Miranda, etc.; the counsel of Prospero to Fernando, when he leaves him alone for a moment with Miranda.

[5] Compare "La Vie de Bohême" and "Les Nuits d'Hiver," by Murger; "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle," by A. de Musset.

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would continue quaffing, carowsing, and surfeting with me all the day long. . . . If I may have my disire while I live I am satisfied; let me shift after death as I may. . . . 'Hell!' quoth I; 'what talke you of hell to me? I know if I once come there I shall have the company of better men than myselfe; I shall also meete with some madde knaves in that place, and so long as I shall not sit there alone, my care is the lesse. . . . If I feared the judges of the bench no more than I dread the judgments of God I would before I slept dive into one carles bagges or other, and make merrie with the shelles I found in them so long as they would last.'"

A little later he is seized with remorse, marries, depicts in delicious verse the regularity and calm of an upright life; then returns to London, spends his property and his wife's fortune with "a sorry ragged queane," in the company of ruffians, pimps, sharpers, courtesans; drinking, blaspheming, wearing himself out by sleepless nights and orgies; writing for bread, sometimes amid the brawling and effluvia of his wretched lodging, lighting upon thoughts of adoration and love, worthy of Rolla;[6] very often disgusted with himself, seized with a fit of weeping between two merry bouts, and writing little pieces to accuse himself, to regret his wife, to convert his comrades, or to warn young people against the tricks of prostitutes and swindlers. He was soon worn out by this kind of life; six years were enough to exhaust him. An indigestion arising from Rhenish wine and pickled herrings finished him. If it had not been for his landlady, who succored him, he "would have perished in the streets." He lasted a little longer, and then his light went out; now and then he begged her "pittifully for a penny pott of malmesie"; he was covered with lice, he had but one shirt, and when his own was "awashing," he was obliged to borrow her husband's. "His doublet and hose and sword were sold for three shillinges," and the poor folks paid the cost of his burial, four shillings for the winding sheet, and six and fourpence for the burial.

In such low places, on such dunghills, amid such excesses and violence, dramatic genius forced its way, and amongst others, that of the first, of the most powerful, of the true founder of the dramatic school, Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe was an ill-regulated, dissolute, outrageously vehement and audacious spirit, but grand and sombre, with the genuine poetic frenzy; pagan moreover, and rebellious in manners

[6] The hero of one of Alfred de Musset's poems.—Tr.

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and creed. In this universal return to the senses, and in this impulse of natural forces which brought on the Renaissance, the corporeal instincts and the ideas which hallow them, break forth impetuously. Marlowe, like Greene, like Kett,[7] is a sceptic, denies God and Christ, blasphemes the Trinity, declares Moses "a juggler," Christ more worthy of death than Barabas, says that "yf he wer to write a new religion, he wolde undertake both a more excellent and more admirable methode," and "almost in every company he commeth, perswadeth men to Athiesme."[8] Such were the rages, the rashnesses, the excesses which liberty of thought gave rise to in these new minds, who for the first time, after so many centuries, dared to walk unfettered. From his father's shop, crowded with children, from the straps and awls, he found himself studying at Cambridge, probably through the patronage of a great man, and on his return to London, in want, amid the license of the green-room, the low houses and taverns, his head was in a ferment, and his passions became excited. He turned actor; but having broken his leg in a scene of debauchery, he remained lame, and could no longer appear on the boards. He openly avowed his infidelity, and a prosecution was begun, which, if time had not failed, would probably have brought him to the stake. He made love to a drab, and in trying to stab his rival, his hand was turned, so that his own blade entered his eye and his brain, and he died, cursing and blaspheming. He was only thirty years old.

Think what poetry could emanate from a life so passionate, and occupied in such a manner! First, exaggerated declamation, heaps of murder, atrocities, a pompous and furious display of tragedy bespattered with blood, and passions raised to a pitch of madness. All the foundations of the English stage, "Ferrex and Porrex," "Cambyses," "Hieronymo," even the "Pericles" of Shakespeare, reach the same height of extravagance, magniloquence and horror.[9] It is the first outbreak of youth. Recall Schiller's "Robbers," and how modern democracy has recognized for the first time its picture in the metaphors and cries of Charles Moor.[10] So here the characters struggle and roar,

[7] Burnt in 1589.

[8] I have used Marlowe's Works, ed. Dyce, 3 vols. 1850. Append. i. vol. 3.—Tr.

[9] See especially "Titus Andronicus," attributed to Shakespeare: there are parricides, mothers whom they cause to eat their children, a young girl who appears on the stage violated, with her tongue and hands cut off.

[10] The chief character in Schiller's "Robbers," a virtuous brigand and redresser of wrongs.—Tr.

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stamp on the earth, gnash their teeth, shake their fists against heaven. The trumpets sound, the drums beat, coats of mail file past armies clash, men stab each other, or themselves; speeches are full of gigantic threats and lyrical figures; [11] kings die, straining a bass voice; "now doth ghastly death with greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart, and like a harpy tires on my life." The hero in "Tamburlaine the Great" [12] is seated on a chariot drawn by chained kings; he burns towns, drowns women and children, puts men to the sword, and finally, seized with an inscrutable sickness, raves in monstrous outcries against the gods, whose hands afflict his soul, and whom he would fain dethrone. There already is the picture of senseless pride, of blind and murderous rage, which passing through many devastations, at last arms against heaven itself. The overflowing of savage and immoderate instinct produces this mighty sounding verse, this prodigality of carnage, this display of splendors and exaggerated colors, this railing of demoniacal passions, this audacity of grand impiety. If in the dramas which succeed it, "The Massacre at Paris," "The Jew of Malta," the bombast decreases, the violence remains. Barabas the Jew maddened with hate, is henceforth no longer human; he has been treated by the Christians like a beast, and he hates them like a beast. He advises his servant Ithamore in the following words:

"Hast thou no trade? then listen to my words,
And I will teach thee that shall stick by thee:
First, be thou void of these affections,
Compassion, love, vain hope, and heartless fear;
Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pity none,
But to thyself smile when the Christians moan.
. . . I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls;
Sometimes I go about and poison wells. . . .

[11] For in a field, whose superficies
Is cover'd with a liquid purple veil,
And sprinkled with the brains of slaughter'd men,
My royal chair of state shall be advanc'd;
And he that means to place himself therein,
Must armed wade up to the chin in blood. . . .
And I would strive to swim through pools of blood,
Or make a bridge of murder'd carcasses,
Whose arches should be fram'd with bones of Turks
Ere I would lose the title of a king.—"Tamburlaine," part ii. i. 3.

[12] The editor of Marlowe's Works, Pickering, 1826, says in his Introduction: "Both the matter and style of 'Tamburlaine,' however, differ materially from Marlowe's other compositions, and doubts have more than once been suggested as to whether the play was properly assigned to him. We think that Marlowe did not write it." Dyce is of a contrary opinion.—Tr.

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Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practice first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in ure
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells. . . .
I fill'd the jails with bankrouts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals;
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll
How I with interest tormented him." [13]

All these cruelties he boasts of and chuckles over, like a demon who rejoices in being a good executioner, and plunges his victims in the very extremity of anguish. His daughter has two Christian suitors; and by forged letters he causes them to slay each other. In despair she takes the veil, and to avenge himself he poisons his daughter and the whole convent. Two friars wish to denounce him, then to convert him; he strangles the first, and jokes with his slave Ithamore, a cut-throat by profession, who loves his trade, rubs his hands with joy, and says:

" Pull amain,
'Tis neatly done, sir; here's no print at all.
So, let him lean upon his staff; excellent! he stands as if he were begging of bacon." [14]
" O mistress, I have the bravest, gravest, secret, subtle, bottlenosed knave to my master, that ever gentleman had." [15]

The second friar comes up, and they accuse him of the murder.

" *Barabas.* Heaven bless me! what, a friar a murderer!
When shall you see a Jew commit the like?
Ithamore. Why, a Turk could ha' done no more.
Bar. To-morrow is the sessions; you shall do it—
Come Ithamore, let's help to take him hence.
Friar. Villains, I am a sacred person; touch me not.
Bar. The law shall touch you; we'll but lead you, we:
'Las, I could weep at your calamity! " [16]

We have also two other poisonings, an infernal machine to blow up the Turkish garrison, a plot to cast the Turkish commander into a well. Barabas falls into it himself, and dies in the hot caldron,[17] howling, hardened, remorseless, having but one

[13] Marlowe's " The Jew of Malta," ii. p. 275 et passim.
[14] Ibid. iv. p. 311.
[15] Ibid. iii. p. 291.
[16] Ibid. iv. p. 313.
[17] Up to this time, in England, poisoners were cast into a boiling caldron.

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regret, that he had not done evil enough. These are the ferocities of the Middle Ages; we might find them to this day among the companions of Ali Pacha, among the pirates of the Archipelago; we retain pictures of them in the paintings of the fifteenth century, which represent a king with his court, seated calmly round a living man who is being flayed; in the midst the flayer on his knees is working conscientiously, very careful not to spoil the skin.[18]

All this is pretty strong, you will say; these people kill too readily, and too quickly. It is on this very account that the painting is a true one. For the specialty of the men of the time, as of Marlowe's characters, is the abrupt commission of a deed; they are children, robust children. As a horse kicks out instead of speaking, so they pull out their knives instead of asking an explanation. Nowadays we hardly know what nature is; instead of observing it we still retain the benevolent prejudices of the eighteenth century; we only see it humanized by two centuries of culture, and we take its acquired calm for an innate moderation. The foundations of the natural man are irresistible impulses, passions, desires, greeds; all blind. He sees a woman,[19] thinks her beautiful; suddenly he rushes towards her; people try to restrain him, he kills these people, gluts his passion, then thinks no more of it, save when at times a vague picture of a moving lake of blood crosses his brain and makes him gloomy. Sudden and extreme resolves are confused in his mind with desire; barely planned, the thing is done; the wide interval which a Frenchman places between the idea of an action and the action itself is not to be found here.[20] Barabas conceived murders, and straightway murders were accomplished; there is no deliberation, no pricks of conscience; that is how he commits a score of them; his daughter leaves him, he becomes unnatural, and poisons her; his confidential servant betrays him, he disguises himself, and poisons him. Rage seizes these men like a fit, and then they are forced to kill. Benvenuto Cellini relates how, being offended, he tried to restrain himself, but was nearly suffo-

[18] In the Museum of Ghent.

[19] See in the "Jew of Malta" the seduction of Ithamore, by Bellamira, a rough, but truly admirable picture.

[20] Nothing could be falser than the hesitation and arguments of Schiller's "William Tell"; for a contrast, see Goethe's "Goetz von Berlichingen." In 1377, Wycliff pleaded in St. Paul's before the bishop of London, and that raised a quarrel. The Duke of Lancaster, Wycliff's protector, "threatened to drag the bishop out of the church by the hair"; and next day the furious crowd sacked the duke's palace.

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cated; and that in order to cure himself, he rushed with his dagger upon his opponent. So, in "Edward the Second," the nobles immediately appeal to arms; all is excessive and unforeseen: between two replies the heart is turned upside down, transported to the extremes of hate or tenderness. Edward, seeing his favorite Gaveston again, pours out before him his treasure, casts his dignities at his feet, gives him his seal, himself, and, on a threat from the Bishop of Coventry, suddenly cries:

> "Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,
> And in the channel christen him anew." [21]

Then, when the queen supplicates:

> "Fawn not on me, French strumpet! get thee gone. . . .
> Speak not unto her: let her droop and pine." [22]

Furies and hatreds clash together like horsemen in battle. The Earl of Lancaster draws his sword on Gaveston to slay him, before the king; Mortimer wounds Gaveston. These powerful loud voices growl; the noblemen will not even let a dog approach the prince, and rob them of their rank. Lancaster says of Gaveston:

> ". . . He comes not back,
> Unless the sea cast up his shipwrack'd body.
> *Warwick.* And to behold so sweet a sight as that,
> There's none here but would run his horse to death." [23]

They have seized Gaveston, and intend to hang him "at a bough"; they refuse to let him speak a single minute with the king. In vain they are entreated; when they do at last consent, they are sorry for it; it is a prey they want immediately, and Warwick, seizing him by force, "strake off his head in a trench." Those are the men of the Middle Ages. They have the fierceness, the tenacity, the pride of big, well-fed, thorough-bred bulldogs. It is this sternness and impetuosity of primitive passions which produced the Wars of the Roses, and for thirty years drove the nobles on each other's swords and to the block.

What is there beyond all these frenzies and gluttings of blood? The idea of crushing necessity and inevitable ruin in which

[21] Marlowe, "Edward the Second," i. p. 173.
[22] Ibid. p. 186.
[23] Ibid. p. 188.

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everything sinks and comes to an end. Mortimer, brought to the block, says with a smile:

> "Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
> There is a point, to which, when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong down: that point I touch'd,
> And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?—
> Farewell, fair queen; weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown." [24]

Weigh well these grand words; they are a cry from the heart, the profound confession of Marlowe, as also of Byron, and of the old sea-kings. The northern paganism is fully expressed in this heroic and mournful sigh: it is thus they imagine the world so long as they remain on the outside of Christianity, or as soon as they quit it. Thus, when men see in life, as they did, nothing but a battle of unchecked passions, and in death but a gloomy sleep, perhaps filled with mournful dreams, there is no other supreme good but a day of enjoyment and victory. They glut themselves, shutting their eyes to the issue, except that they may be swallowed up on the morrow. That is the master-thought of "Doctor Faustus," the greatest of Marlowe's dramas: to satisfy his soul, no matter at what price, or with what results:

> "A sound magician is a mighty god. . . .
> How am I glutted with conceit of this! . . .
> I'll have them fly to India for gold,
> Ransack the ocean for orient pearl. . . .
> I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
> And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;
> I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
> And make swift Rhine circle fair Wertenberg. . . .
> Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
> Like Almain rutters with their horsemen's staves,
> Or Lapland giants, trotting by our sides;
> Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
> Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
> Than have the white breasts of the queen of love." [25]

What brilliant dreams, what desires, what vast or voluptuous wishes, worthy of a Roman Cæsar or an Eastern poet, eddy in this teeming brain! To satiate them, to obtain four-and-twenty

[24] Marlowe, "Edward the Second," last scene, p. 288.

[25] Marlowe, "Doctor Faustus," i. p. 9 et passim.

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years of power, Faustus gave his soul, without fear, without need of temptation, at the first outset, voluntarily, so sharp is the prick within:

> "Had I as many souls as there be stars,
> I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.
> By him I'll be great emperor of the world,
> And make a bridge thorough the moving air. . . .
> Why shouldst thou not? Is not thy soul thine own?" [26]

And with that he gives himself full swing: he wants to know everything, to have everything; a book in which he can behold all herbs and trees which grow upon the earth; another in which shall be drawn all the constellations and planets; another which shall bring him gold when he wills it, and "the fairest courtezans"; another which summons "men in armour" ready to execute his commands, and which holds "whirlwinds, tempests, thunder and lightning" chained at his disposal. He is like a child, he stretches out his hands for everything shining; then grieves to think of hell, then lets himself be diverted by shows:

> "*Faustus.* O this feeds my soul!
> *Lucifer.* Tut, Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight.
> *Faustus.* Oh, might I see hell, and return again,
> How happy were I then! . . ." [27]

He is conducted, being invisible, over the whole world: lastly to Rome, amongst the ceremonies of the pope's court. Like a schoolboy during a holiday, he has insatiable eyes, he forgets everything before a pageant, he amuses himself in playing tricks, in giving the pope a box on the ear, in beating the monks, in performing magic tricks before princes, finally in drinking, feasting, filling his belly, deadening his thoughts. In his transport he becomes an atheist, and says there is no hell, that those are "old wives' tales." Then suddenly the sad idea knocks at the gates of his brain.

> "I will renounce this magic, and repent . . .
> My heart's so harden'd I cannot repent:
> Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
> But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears,
> 'Faustus, thou are damn'd!' then swords and knives,
> Poison, guns, halters, and envenom'd steel
> Are laid before me to despatch myself;

[26] Marlowe, "Doctor Faustus," i. pp. 22, 29. [27] Ibid. p. 43.

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And long ere this I should have done the deed,
Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death?
And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephistophilis?
Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolv'd; Faustus shall ne'er repent.—
Come Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,
And argue of divine astrology.
Tell me, are there many heavens above the moon?
Are all celestial bodies but one globe,
As is the substance of this centric earth? . . ." [28]
"One thing . . . let me crave of thee
To glut the longing of my heart's desire. . . .
Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena. . . .
O thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!" [29]

"Oh, my God, I would weep! but the devil draws in my tears. Gush forth blood, instead of tears! yea, life and soul! Oh, he stays my tongue! I would lift up my hands; but see, they hold them, they hold them; Lucifer and Mephistophilis. . . ." [30]

"Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come. . . .
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
Oh, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ,
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ,
Yet will I call on him. . . .
Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon. . . .
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd. . . .
It strikes, it strikes. . . .

[28] Marlowe, "Doctor Faustus," i. p. 37. [29] Ibid. p. 75. [30] Ibid. p. 78.

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Oh soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!" [31]

There is the living, struggling, natural, personal man, not the philosophic type which Goethe has created, but a primitive and genuine man, hot-headed, fiery, the slave of his passions, the sport of his dreams, wholly engrossed in the present, moulded by his lusts, contradictions, and follies, who amidst noise and starts, cries of pleasure and anguish, rolls, knowing it and willing it, down the slope and crags of his precipice. The whole English drama is here, as a plant in its seed, and Marlowe is to Shakespeare what Perugino was to Raphael.

Section V.—Formation of the Drama

Gradually art is being formed; and toward the close of the century it is complete. Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Webster, Massinger, Ford, Middleton, Heywood, appear together, or close upon each other, a new and favored generation, flourishing largely in the soil fertilized by the efforts of the generation which preceded them. Henceforth the scenes are developed and assume consistency, the characters cease to move all of a piece, the drama is no longer like a piece of statuary. The poet who a little while ago knew only how to strike or kill, introduces now a sequence of situation and a rationale in intrigue. He begins to prepare the way for sentiments, to forewarn us of events, to combine effects, and we find a theatre at last, the most complete, the most life-like, and also the most strange that ever existed.

We must follow its formation, and regard the drama when it was formed, that is, in the minds of its authors. What was going on in these minds? What sorts of ideas were born there, and how were they born? In the first place, they see the event, whatever it be, and they see it as it is; I mean that they have it within themselves, with its persons and details, beautiful and ugly, even dull and grotesque. If it is a trial, the judge is there, in their minds, in his place, with his physiognomy and his warts; the plaintiff in another place, with his spectacles and brief-bag; the accused is opposite, stooping and remorseful; each with his

[31] Marlowe "Doctor Faustus," i. p. 80.

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friends, cobblers, or lords; then the buzzing crowd behind, all with their grinning faces, their bewildered or kindling eyes.[1] It is a genuine trial which they imagine, a trial like those they have seen before the justice, where they screamed or shouted as witnesses or interested parties, with their quibbling terms, their pros and cons, the scribblings, the sharp voices of the counsel, the stamping of feet, the crowding, the smell of their fellow-men, and so forth. The endless myriads of circumstances which accompany and influence every event, crowd round that event in their heads, and not merely the externals, that is, the visible and picturesque traits, the details of color and costume, but also, and chiefly, the internals, that is, the motions of anger and joy, the secret tumult of the soul, the ebb and flow of ideas and passions which are expressed by the countenance, swell the veins, make a man to grind his teeth, to clench his fists, which urge him on or restrain him. They see all the details, the tides that sway a man, one from without, another from within, one through another, one within another, both together without faltering and without ceasing. And what is this insight but sympathy, an imitative sympathy, which puts us in another's place, which carries over their agitations to our own breasts, which makes our life a little world, able to reproduce the great one in abstract? Like the characters they imagine, poets and spectators make gestures, raise their voices, act. No speech or story can show their inner mood, but it is the scenic effect which can manifest it. As some men invent a language for their ideas, so these act and mimic them; theatrical imitation and figured representation is their genuine speech: all other expression, the lyrical song of Æschylus, the reflective symbolism of Goethe, the oratorical development of Racine, would be impossible for them. Involuntarily, instantaneously, without forecast, they cut life into scenes, and carry it piecemeal on the boards; this goes so far that often a mere character becomes an actor,[2] playing a part within a part; the scenic faculty is the natural form of their mind. Beneath the effort of this instinct, all the accessory parts of the drama come before the footlights and expand before your eyes. A battle has been fought; instead of relating it, they bring it before the public, trumpets and drums, pushing crowds, slaughtering

[1] See the trial of Vittoria Corombona, of Virginia in Webster, of Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar in Shakespeare.

[2] Falstaff in Shakespeare; the queen in "London," by Greene and Decker; Rosalind in Shakespeare.

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combatants. A shipwreck happens; straightway the ship is before the spectator, with the sailors' oaths, the technical orders of the pilot. Of all the details of human life,[3] tavern-racket and statesmen's councils, scullion's talk and court processions, domestic tenderness and pandering—none is too small or too lofty: these things exist in life—let them exist on the stage, each in full, in the rough, atrocious, or absurd, just as they are, no matter how. Neither in Greece, nor Italy, nor Spain, nor France, has an art been seen which tried so boldly to express the soul, and its innermost depths—the truth, and the whole truth.

How did they succeed, and what is this new art which tramples on all ordinary rules? It is an art for all that, since it is natural; a great art, since it embraces more things, and that more deeply than others do, like the art of Rembrandt and Rubens; but like theirs, it is a Teutonic art, and one whose every step is in contrast with those of classical art. What the Greeks and Romans, the originators of the latter, sought in everything, was charm and order. Monuments, statues, and paintings, the theatre, eloquence and poetry, from Sophocles to Racine, they shaped all their work in the same mould, and attained beauty by the same method. In the infinite entanglement and complexity of things, they grasped a small number of simple ideas, which they embraced in a small number of simple representations, so that the vast confused vegetation of life is presented to the mind from that time forth, pruned and reduced, and perhaps easily embraced at a single glance. A square of walls with rows of columns all alike; a symmetrical group of draped or undraped forms; a young man standing up and raising one arm; a wounded warrior who will not return to the camp, though they beseech him: this, in their noblest epoch, was their architecture, their painting, their sculpture, and their theatre. No poetry but a few sentiments not very intricate, always natural, not toned down, intelligible to all; no eloquence but a continuous argument, a limited vocabulary, the loftiest ideas brought down to their sensible origin, so that children can understand such eloquence and feel such poetry; and in this sense they are classical.[4]

[3] In Webster's "Duchess of Malfi" there is an admirable accouchement scene.

[4] This is, in fact, the English view of the French mind, which is doubtless a refinement, many times refined, of the classical spirit. But M. Taine has seemingly not taken into account such products as the Medea on the one hand, and the works of Aristophanes and the Latin sensualists on the other.—Tr.

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In the hands of Frenchmen, the last inheritors of the simple art, these great legacies of antiquity undergo no change. If poetic genius is less, the structure of mind has not altered. Racine puts on the stage a sole action, whose details he adjusts, and whose course he regulates; no incident, nothing unforeseen, no appendices or incongruities; no secondary intrigue. The subordinate parts are effaced; at the most four or five principal characters, the fewest possible; the rest, reduced to the condition of confidants, take the tone of their masters, and merely reply to them. All the scenes are connected, and flow insensibly one into the other, and every scene, like the entire piece, has its order and progress. The tragedy stands out symmetrically and clear in the midst of human life, like a complete and solitary temple which limns its regular outline on the luminous azure of the sky. in England all is different. All that the French call proportion and fitness is wanting; Englishmen do not trouble themselves about them, they do not need them. There is no unity; they leap suddenly over twenty years, or five hundred leagues. There are twenty scenes in an act—we stumble without preparation from one to the other, from tragedy to buffoonery; usually it appears as though the action gained no ground; the different personages waste their time in conversation, dreaming, displaying their character. We were moved, anxious for the issue, and here they bring us in quarrelling servants, lovers making poetry. Even the dialogue and speeches, which we would think ought particularly to be of a regular and continuous flow of engrossing ideas, remain stagnant, or are scattered in windings and deviations. At first sight we fancy we are not advancing, we do not feel at every phrase that we have made a step. There are none of those solid pleadings, none of those conclusive discussions, which every moment add reason to reason, objection to objection; people might say that the different personages only knew how to scold, to repeat themselves, and to mark time. And the disorder is as great in general as in particular things. They heap a whole reign, a complete war, an entire novel, into a drama; they cut up into scenes an English chronicle or an Italian novel: this is all their art; the events matter little; whatever they are, they accept them. They have no idea of progressive and individual action. Two or three actions connected endwise, or entangled one within another, two or three incomplete

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endings badly contrived, and opened up again; no machinery but death, scattered right and left and unforeseen: such is the logic of their method. The fact is, that our logic, the Latin, fails them. Their mind does not march by the smooth and straightforward paths of rhetoric and eloquence. It reaches the same end, but by other approaches. It is at once more comprehensive and less regular than ours. It demands a conception more complete, but less consecutive. It proceeds, not as with us, by a line of uniform steps, but by sudden leaps and long pauses. It does not rest satisfied with a simple idea drawn from a complex fact, but demands the complex fact entire, with its numberless particularities, its interminable ramifications. It sees in man not a general passion—ambition, anger, or love; not a pure quality—happiness, avarice, folly; but a character, that is, the imprint, wonderfully complicated, which inheritance, temperament, education, calling, age, society, conversation, habits, have stamped on every man; an incommunicable and individual imprint, which, once stamped in a man, is not found again in any other. It sees in the hero not only the hero, but the individual, with his manner of walking, drinking, swearing, blowing his nose; with the tone of his voice, whether he is thin or fat;[6] and thus plunges to the bottom of things, with every look, as by a miner's deep shaft. This sunk, it little cares whether the second shaft be two paces or a hundred from the first; enough that it reaches the same depth, and serves equally well to display the inner and visible layer. Logic is here from beneath, not from above. It is the unity of a character which binds the two actions of the personage, as the unity of an impression connects the two scenes of a drama. To speak exactly, the spectator is like a man whom we should lead along a wall pierced at separate intervals with little windows; at every window he catches for an instant a glimpse of a new landscape, with its million details: the walk over, if he is of Latin race and training, he finds a medley of images jostling in his head, and asks for a map that he may recollect himself; if he is of German race and training, he perceives as a whole, by natural concentration, the wide country which he has only seen piecemeal. Such a conception, by the multitude of details which it combines, and by the depth of the

[6] See Hamlet, Coriolanus, Hotspur. The queen in "Hamlet" (v. 2) says: "He (Hamlet) is fat, and scant of breath."

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vistas which it embraces, is a half-vision which shakes the whole soul. What its works are about to show us is, with what energy, what disdain of contrivance, what vehemence of truth, it dares to coin and hammer the human medal; with what liberty it is able to reproduce in full prominence worn-out characters, and the extreme flights of virgin nature.

Section VI.—Furious Passions.—Exaggerated Characters

Let us consider the different personages which this art, so suited to depict real manners, and so apt to paint the living soul, goes in search of amidst the real manners and the living souls of its time and country. They are of two kinds, as befits the nature of the drama: one which produces terror, the other which moves to pity; these graceful and feminine, those manly and violent. All the differences of sex, all the extremes of life, all the resources of the stage, are embraced in this contrast; and if ever there was a complete contrast, it is here.

The reader must study for himself some of these pieces, or he will have no idea of the fury into which the stage is hurled: force and transport are driven every instant to the point of atrocity, and further still, if there be any further. Assassinations, poisonings, tortures, outcries of madness and rage; no passion and no suffering are too extreme for their energy or their effort. Anger is with them a madness, ambition a frenzy, love a delirium. Hippolyto, who has lost his mistress, says, "Were thine eyes clear as mine, thou mightst behold her, watching upon yon battlements of stars, how I observe them."[1] Aretus, to be avenged on Valentinian, poisons him after poisoning himself, and with the death-rattle in his throat, is brought to his enemy's side, to give him a foretaste of agony. Queen Brunhalt has panders with her on the stage, and causes her two sons to slay each other. Death everywhere; at the close of every play, all the great people wade in blood: with slaughter and butcheries, the stage becomes a field of battle or a churchyard.[2] Shall I describe a few of these tragedies? In the "Duke of Milan," Francesco, to

[1] Middleton, "The Honest Whore," part i. iv. 1.

[2] Beaumont and Fletcher, "Valentinian," "Thierry and Theodoret." See Massinger's "Picture," which resembles Musset's "Barberine." Its crudity, the extraordinary repulsive energy, will show the difference of the two ages.

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avenge his sister, who has been seduced, wishes to seduce in his turn the Duchess Marcelia, wife of Sforza, the seducer; he desires her, he will have her; he says to her, with cries of love and rage:

> "For with this arm I'll swim through seas of blood,
> Or make a bridge, arch'd with the bones of men,
> But I will grasp my aims in you, my dearest,
> Dearest, and best of women!" [3]

For he wishes to strike the duke through her, whether she lives or dies, if not by dishonor, at least by murder; the first is as good as the second, nay, better, for so he will do a greater injury. He calumniates her, and the duke, who adores her, kills her; then, being undeceived, loses his senses, will not believe she is dead, has the body brought in, kneels before it, rages and weeps. He knows now the name of the traitor, and at the thought of him he swoons or raves:

> "I'll follow him to hell, but I will find him,
> And there live a fourth Fury to torment him.
> Then, for this cursed hand and arm that guided
> The wicked steel, I'll have them, joint by joint,
> With burning irons sear'd off, which I will eat,
> I being a vulture fit to taste such carrion." [4]

Suddenly he gasps for breath, and falls; Francesco has poisoned him. The duke dies, and the murderer is led to torture. There are worse scenes than this; to find sentiments strong enough, they go to those which change the very nature of man. Massinger puts on the stage a father who judges and condemns his daughter, stabbed by her husband; Webster and Ford, a son who assassinates his mother; Ford, the incestuous loves of a brother and sister.[5] Irresistible love overtakes them; the ancient love of Pasiphaë and Myrrha, a kind of madness-like enchantment, and beneath which the will entirely gives way. Giovanni says:

> "Lost! I am lost! My fates have doom'd my death!
> The more I strive, I love; the more I love,
> The less I hope: I see my ruin certain. . . .
> I have even wearied heaven with pray'rs, dried up

[3] Massinger's Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859, "Duke of Milan," ii. 1.
[4] Ibid. v. 2.
[5] Massinger, "The Fatal Dowry"; Webster and Ford, "A late Murther of the Sonne upon the Mother" (a play not extant); "'Tis pity she's a Whore." See also Ford's "Broken Heart," with its sublime scenes of agony and madness.

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The spring of my continual tears, even starv'd
My veins with daily fasts: what wit or art
Could counsel, I have practis'd; but, alas!
I find all these but dreams, and old men's tales,
To fright unsteady youth: I am still the same;
Or I must speak, or burst." [6]

What transports follow! what fierce and bitter joys, and how short too, how grievous and mingled with anguish, especially for her! She is married to another. Read for yourself the admirable and horrible scene which represents the wedding night. She is pregnant, and Soranzo, the husband, drags her along the ground, with curses, demanding the name of her lover:

"Come strumpet, famous whore? . . .
Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain'st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I?
Must your hot itch and plurisy of lust,
The heyday of your luxury, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be pick'd out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports?—Now I must be the dad
To all that gallimaufry that is stuff'd
In thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb?
Say, must I?
Annabella. Beastly man? why, 'tis thy fate.
I su'd not to thee. . . .
S. Tell me by whom." [7]

She gets excited, feels and cares for nothing more, refuses to tell the name of her lover, and praises him in the following words. This praise in the midst of danger is like a rose she has plucked, and of which the odor intoxicates her:

"*A.* Soft! 'twas not in my bargain.
Yet somewhat, sir, to stay your longing stomach
I am content t' acquaint you with *the* man,
The more than man, that got this sprightly boy—
(For 'tis a boy, and therefore glory, sir,
Your heir shall be a son.)
S. Damnable monster?
A. Nay, and you will not hear, I'll speak no more.
S. Yes, speak, and speak thy last.

[6] Ford's Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859. [7] Ibid. iv. 3.

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A. A match, a match? . . .
You, why you are not worthy once to name
His name without true worship, or, indeed,
Unless you kneel'd to hear another name him.
S. What was he call'd?
A. We are not come to that;
Let it suffice that you shall have the glory
To father what so brave a father got. . . .
S. Dost thou laugh?
Come, whore, tell me your lover, or, by truth,
I'll hew thy flesh to shreds; who is't?" [8]

She laughs; the excess of shame and terror has given her courage; she insults him, she sings; so like a woman!

"*A.* (Sings) *Che morte piu dolce che morire per amore.*
S. Thus will I pull thy hair, and thus I'll drag
Thy lust be-leper'd body through the dust. . . .
(*Hales her up and down*)
A. Be a gallant hangman. . . .
I leave revenge behind, and thou shalt feel't. . . .
(*To Vasques.*) Pish, do not beg for me, I prize my life
As nothing; if the man will needs be mad,
Why, let him take it." [9]

In the end all is discovered, and the two lovers know they must die. For the last time, they see each other in Annabella's chamber, listening to the noise of the feast below which shall serve for their funeral feast. Giovanni, who has made his resolve like a madman, sees Annabella richly dressed, dazzling. He regards her in silence, and remembers the past. He weeps and says:

"These are the funeral tears,
Shed on your grave; these furrow'd-up my cheeks
When first I lov'd and knew not how to woo. . . .
Give me your hand: how sweetly life doth run
In these well-colour'd veins! How constantly
These palms do promise health! . . .
Kiss me again, forgive me. . . . Farewell." [10]

He then stabs her, enters the banqueting room, with her heart upon his dagger:

"Soranzo see this heart, which was thy wife's.
Thus I exchange it royally for thine." [11]

[8] Ford's Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859, iv. 3.
[9] Ibid. iv. 3.
[10] Ibid. v. 5.
[11] Ibid. v. 6.

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He kills him, and casting himself on the swords of banditti, dies. It would seem that tragedy could go no further.

But it did go further; for if these are melodramas, they are sincere, composed, not like those of to-day, by Grub Street writers for peaceful citizens, but by impassioned men, experienced in tragical arts, for a violent, over-fed, melancholy race. From Shakespeare to Milton, Swift, Hogarth, no race has been more glutted with coarse expressions and horrors, and its poets supply them plentifully; Ford less so than Webster; the latter a sombre man, whose thoughts seem incessantly to be haunting tombs and charnel-houses. "Places in court," he says, "are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower." [12] Such are his images. No one has equalled Webster in creating desperate characters, utter wretches, bitter misanthropes,[13] in blackening and blaspheming human life, above all, in depicting the shameless depravity and refined ferocity of Italian manners.[14] The Duchess of Malfi has secretly married her steward Antonio, and her brother learns that she has children; almost mad [15] with rage and wounded pride, he remains silent, waiting until he knows the name of the father; then he arrives all of a sudden, means to kill her, but so that she shall taste the lees of death. She must suffer much, but above all, she must not die too quickly! She must suffer in mind; these griefs are worse than the body's. He sends assassins to kill Antonio, and meanwhile comes to her in the dark, with affectionate words; he pretends to be reconciled, and suddenly shows her waxen figures, covered with wounds, whom she takes for her slaughtered husband and children. She staggers under the blow, and remains in gloom without crying out. Then she says:

> "Good comfortable fellow,
> Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel

[12] Webster's Works, ed. Dyce, 1857, "Duchess of Malfi," i. 1.
[13] The characters of Bosola, Flaminio.
[14] See Stendhal, "Chronicles of Italy," "The Cenci," "The Duchess of Palliano," and all the biographies of the time; of the Borgias, of Bianca Capello, of Vittoria Corombona.

[15] Ferdinand, one of the brothers, says (ii. 5):

> "I would have their bodies
> Burnt in a coal-pit with the ventage stopp'd,
> That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to heaven;
> Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur,
> Wrap them in't, and then light them as a match;
> Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis,
> And give't his lecherous father to renew
> The sin of his back."

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To have all his bones new set; entreat him live
To be executed again. Who must despatch me? . . .
Bosola. Come, be of comfort, I will save your life.
Duchess. Indeed, I have not leisure to tend
So small a business.
B. Now, by my life, I pity you.
D. Thou art a fool, then,
To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched
As cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers." [16]

Slow words, spoken in a whisper, as in a dream, or as if she were speaking of a third person. Her brother sends to her a company of madmen, who leap and howl and rave around her in mournful wise; a pitiful sight, calculated to unseat the reason; a kind of foretaste of hell. She says nothing, looking upon them; her heart is dead, her eyes fixed, with vacant stare:

"*Cariola.* What think you of, madam?
Duchess. Of nothing:
When I muse thus, I sleep.
C. Like a madman, with your eyes open?
D. Dost thou think we shall know one another
In the other world?
C. Yes, out of question.
D. O that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here. I'll teach thee a miracle;
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow:
The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar. . . ." [17]

In this state, the limbs, like those of one who has been newly executed, still quiver, but the sensibility is worn out; the miserable body only stirs mechanically; it has suffered too much. At last the gravedigger comes with executioners, a coffin, and they sing before her a funeral dirge:

"*Duchess.* Farewell, Cariola . . .
I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.—Now, what you please:
What death?
Bosola. Strangling; here are your executioners.

[16] "Duchess of Malfi," iv. 1. [17] Ibid. iv. 2.

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D. I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' the lungs
Would do as much as they do. . . . My body
Bestow upon my women, will you? . . .
Go, tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet." [18]

After the mistress the maid; the latter cries and struggles:

"*Cariola.* I will not die; I must not; I am contracted
To a young gentleman.
1st Executioner. Here's your wedding-ring.
C. If you kill me now,
I am damn'd. I have not been at confession
This two years.
B. When? [19]
C. I am quick with child." [20]

They strangle her also, and the two children of the duchess. Antonio is assassinated; the cardinal and his mistress, the duke and his confidant, are poisoned or butchered; and the solemn words of the dying, in the midst of this butchery, utter, as from funereal trumpets, a general curse upon existence:

"We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves,
That, ruin'd yield no echo. Fare you well. . . .
O this gloomy world!
In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!" [21]

"In all our quest of greatness,
Like wanton boys, whose pastime is their care,
We follow after bubbles blown in the air.
Pleasure of life, what is't? only the good hours
Of an ague; merely a preparative to rest,
To endure vexation. . . .
Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,
Like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust." [22]

You will find nothing sadder or greater from the Edda to Lord Byron.

We can well imagine what powerful characters are necessary to sustain these terrible dramas. All these personages are ready

[18] "Duchess of Malfi," iv. 2.
[19] "When," an exclamation of impatience, equivalent to "make haste," very common among the old English dramatists.—TR.
[20] "Duchess of Malfi," iv. 2.
[21] Ibid. v. 5.
[22] Ibid. v. 4 and 5.

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for extreme acts; their resolves break forth like blows of a sword; we follow, meet at every change of scene their glowing eyes, wan lips, the starting of their muscles, the tension of their whole frame. Their powerful will contracts their violent hands, and their accumulated passion breaks out in thunderbolts, which tear and ravage all around them, and in their own hearts. We know them, the heroes of this tragic population, Iago, Richard III, Lady Macbeth, Othello, Coriolanus, Hotspur, full of genius, courage, desire, generally mad or criminal, always self-driven to the tomb. There are as many around Shakespeare as in his own works. Let me exhibit one character more, written by the same dramatist, Webster. No one, except Shakespeare, has seen further into the depths of diabolical and unchained nature. The "White Devil" is the name which he gives to his heroine. His Vittoria Corombona receives as her lover the Duke of Brachiano, and at the first interview dreams of the issue:

> "To pass away the time, I'll tell your grace
> A dream I had last night."

It is certainly well related, and still better chosen, of deep meaning and very clear import. Her brother Flaminio says, aside:

> "Excellent devil! she hath taught him in a dream
> To make away his duchess and her husband." [28]

So, her husband, Camillo, is strangled, the Duchess poisoned, and Vittoria, accused of the two crimes, is brought before the tribunal. Step by step, like a soldier brought to bay with his back against a wall, she defends herself, refuting and defying advocates and judges, incapable of blenching or quailing, clear in mind, ready in word, amid insults and proofs, even menaced with death on the scaffold. The advocate begins to speak in Latin.

> "*Vittoria.* Pray my lord, let him speak his usual tongue;
> I'll make no answer else.
> *Francisco de Medicis.* Why, you understand Latin.
> *V.* I do, sir; but amongst this auditory
> Which come to hear my cause, the half or more
> May be ignorant in't."

[28] "Vittoria Corombona," i. 2.

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She wants a duel, bare-breasted, in open day, and challenges the advocate:

> "I am at the mark, sir: I'll give aim to you,
> And tell you how near you shoot."

She mocks his legal phraseology, insults him, with biting irony:

> "Surely, my lords, this lawyer here hath swallow'd
> Some pothecaries' bills, or proclamations;
> And now the hard and undigestible words
> Come up, like stones we use give hawks for physic:
> Why, this is Welsh to Latin."

Then, to the strongest adjuration of the judges:

> "To the point,
> Find me but guilty, sever head from body,
> We'll part good friends; I scorn to hold my life
> At yours, or any man's entreaty, sir. . . .
> These are but feigned shadows of my evils:
> Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils;
> I am past such needless palsy. For your names
> Of whore and murderess, they proceed from you,
> As if a man should spit against the wind;
> The filth returns in's face." [24]

Argument for argument: she has a parry for every blow: a parry and a thrust:

> "But take you your course: it seems you have beggar'd me first,
> And now would fain undo me. I have houses,
> Jewels, and a poor remnant of crusadoes:
> Would those would make you charitable!"

Then, in a harsher voice:

> "In faith, my lord, you might go pistol flies;
> The sport would be more noble."

They condemn her to be shut up in a house of convertites:

> "*V.* A house of convertites! What's that?
> *Monticelso.* A house of penitent whores.
> *V.* Do the noblemen in Rome
> Erect it for their wives, that I am sent
> To lodge there?" [25]

The sarcasm comes home like a sword-thrust; then another be-

[24] Webster Dyce, 1857, "Vittoria Corombona," p. 20, 21.

[25] Ibid. iii. 2, p. 23.

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hind it; then cries and curses. She will not bend, she will not weep. She goes off erect, bitter and more haughty than ever:

> "I will not weep;
> No, I do scorn to call up one poor tear
> To fawn on your injustice: bear me hence
> Unto this house of what's your mitigating title?
> *Mont.* Of convertites.
> *V.* It shall not be a house of convertites;
> My mind shall make it honester to me
> Than the Pope's palace, and more peaceable
> Than thy soul, though thou art a cardinal." [26]

Against her furious lover, who accuses her of unfaithfulness, she is as strong as against her judges; she copes with him, casts in his teeth the death of his duchess, forces him to beg pardon, to marry her; she will play the comedy to the end, at the pistol's mouth, with the shamelessness and courage of a courtesan and an empress; [27] snared at last, she will be just as brave and more insulting when the dagger's point threatens her:

> "Yes, I shall welcome death
> As princes do some great ambassadors;
> I'll meet thy weapon half way. . . . 'Twas a manly blow;
> The next thou giv'st, murder some sucking infant;
> And then thou wilt be famous." [28]

When a woman unsexes herself, her actions transcend man's, and there is nothing which she will not suffer or dare.

Section VII.—Female Characters

Opposed to this band of tragic characters, with their distorted features, brazen fronts, combative attitudes, is a troop of sweet and timid figures, pre-eminently tender-hearted, the most graceful and loveworthy whom it has been given to man to depict. In Shakespeare you will meet them in Miranda, Juliet, Desdemona, Virgilia, Ophelia, Cordelia, Imogen; but they abound also in the others; and it is a characteristic of the race to have furnished them, as it is of the drama to have represented them. By a singular coincidence, the women are more of women, the

[26] "Vittoria Corombona," iii. 2, p. 24.
[27] Compare Mme. Marneffe in Balzac's "La Cousine Bette."
[28] "Vittoria Corombona," v. last scene, pp. 49, 50.

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men more of men, here than elsewhere. The two natures go each to its extreme: in the one to boldness, the spirit of enterprise and resistance, the warlike, imperious, and unpolished character; in the other to sweetness, devotion, patience, inextinguishable affection [1]— a thing unknown in distant lands, in France especially so: a woman in England gives herself without drawing back, and places her glory and duty in obedience, forgiveness, adoration, wishing and professing only to be melted and absorbed daily deeper and deeper in him whom she has freely and forever chosen.[2] It is this, an old German instinct, which these great painters of instinct diffuse here, one and all: Penthea, Dorothea, in Ford and Greene; Isabella and the Duchess of Malfi, in Webster; Bianca, Ordella, Arethusa, Juliana, Euphrasia, Amoret, and others, in Beaumont and Fletcher: there are a score of them who, under the severest tests and the strongest temptations, display this wonderful power of self-abandonment and devotion.[3] The soul, in this race, is at once primitive and serious. Women keep their purity longer than elsewhere. They lose respect less quickly; weigh worth and characters less suddenly: they are less apt to think evil, and to take the measure of their husbands. To this day, a great lady, accustomed to company, blushes in the presence of an unknown man, and feels bashful like a little girl: the blue eyes are dropped, and a child-like shame flies to her rosy cheeks. Englishwomen have not the smartness, the boldness of ideas, the assurance of bearing, the precocity, which with the French make of a young girl, in six months, a woman of intrigue and the queen of a drawing-room.[4] Domestic life and obedience are more easy to them. More pliant and more sedentary, they are at the same time more concentrated and introspective, more disposed to follow the noble dream called duty, which is hardly generated in mankind but by silence of the senses. They are not tempted by the voluptuous sweetness which in southern countries is breathed

[1] Hence the happiness and strength of the marriage tie. In France it is but an association of two comrades, tolerably alike and tolerably equal, which gives rise to endless disturbance and bickering.

[2] See the representation of this character throughout English and German literature. Stendhal, an acute observer, saturated with Italian and French morals and ideas, is astonished at this phenomenon. He understands nothing of this kind of devotion, "this slavery which English husbands have had the wit to impose on their wives under the name of duty." These are "the manners of a seraglio." See also "Corinne," by Mme. de Staël.

[3] A perfect woman already: meek and patient.—Heywood.

[4] See, by way of contrast, all Molière's women, so French; even Agnes and little Louison.

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out in the climate, in the sky, in the general spectacle of things; which dissolves every obstacle, which causes privation to be looked upon as a snare and virtue as a theory. They can rest content with dull sensations, dispense with excitement, endure weariness; and in this monotony of a regulated existence, fall back upon themselves, obey a pure idea, employ all the strength of their hearts in maintaining their moral dignity. Thus supported by innocence and conscience, they introduce into love a profound and upright sentiment, abjure coquetry, vanity, and flirtation: they do not lie nor simper. When they love, they are not tasting a forbidden fruit, but are binding themselves for their whole life. Thus understood, love becomes almost a holy thing; the spectator no longer wishes to be spiteful or to jest; women do not think of their own happiness, but of that of the loved ones; they aim not at pleasure, but at devotion. Euphrasia, relating her history to Philaster, says:

> "My father oft would speak
> Your worth and virtue; and, as I did grow
> More and more apprehensive, I did thirst
> To see the man so prais'd; but yet all this
> Was but a maiden longing, to be lost
> As soon as found; till sitting in my window,
> Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
> I thought (but it was you), enter our gates.
> My blood flew out, and back again as fast,
> As I had puff'd it forth and suck'd it in
> Like breath: Then was I call'd away in haste
> To entertain you. Never was a man,
> Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, rais'd
> So high in thoughts as I: You left a kiss
> Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
> From you forever. I did hear you talk,
> Far above singing! After you were gone,
> I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd
> What stirr'd it so: Alas! I found it love;
> Yet far from lust; for could I but have liv'd
> In presence of you, I had had my end." [5]

She had disguised herself as a page,[6] followed him, was his servant; what greater happiness for a woman than to serve on her knees the man she loves? She let him scold her, threaten her with death, wound her.

[5] Beaumont and Fletcher, Works, ed. G. Colman, 3 vols. 1811, "Philaster," v.

[6] Like Kaled in Byron's "Lara."

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" Blest be that hand!
It meant me well. Again, for pity's sake!" [7]

Do what he will, nothing but words of tenderness and adoration can proceed from this heart, these wan lips. Moreover, she takes upon herself a crime of which he is accused, contradicts him when he asserts his guilt, is ready to die in his place. Still more, she is of use to him with the Princess Arethusa, whom he loves; she justifies her rival, brings about their marriage, and asks no other thanks but that she may serve them both. And strange to say, the princess is not jealous.

" *Euphrasia.* Never, Sir, will I
Marry; it is a thing within my vow:
But if I may have leave to serve the princess,
To see the virtues of her lord and her,
I shall have hope to live.
Arethusa. . . . Come, live with me;
Live free as I do. She that loves my lord,
Curst be the wife that hates her!" [8]

What notion of love have they in this country? Whence happens it that all selfishness, all vanity, all rancor, every little feeling, either personal or base, flees at its approach? How comes it that the soul is given up wholly, without hesitation, without reserve, and only dreams thenceforth of prostrating and annihilating itself, as in the presence of a god? Biancha, thinking Cesario ruined, offers herself to him as his wife; and learning that he is not so, gives him up straightway, without a murmur:

" *Biancha.* So dearly I respected both your fame
And quality, that I would first have perish'd
In my sick thoughts, than e'er have given consent
To have undone your fortunes, by inviting
A marriage with so mean a one as I am:
I should have died sure, and no creature known
The sickness that had kill'd me. . . Now since I know
There is no difference 'twixt your birth and mine,
Not much 'twixt our estates (if any be,
The advantage is on my side) I come willingly
To tender you the first-fruits of my heart,
And am content t' accept you for my husband,
Now when you are at the lowest. . . .
Cesario. Why, Biancha,
Report has cozen'd thee; I am not fallen

[7] " Philaster," iv. [8] Ibid. v.

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From my expected honors or possessions,
Tho' from the hope of birth-right.
B. Are you not?
Then I am lost again! I have a suit too;
You'll grant it, if you be a good man. . . .
Pray do not talk of aught what I have said t'ye. . . .
. . . Pity me;
But never love me more! . . . I'll pray for you,
That you may have a virtuous wife, a fair one;
And when I'm dead . . .
C. Fy, fy!
B. Think on me sometimes,
With mercy for this trespass!
C. Let us kiss
At parting, as at coming!
B. This I have
As a free dower to a virgin's grave,
All goodness dwell with you!" [9]

Isabella, Brachiano's duchess, is detrayed, insulted by her faithless husband; to shield him from the vengeance of her family, she takes upon herself the blame of the rupture, purposely plays the shrew, and leaving him at peace with his courtesan, dies embracing his picture. Arethusa allows herself to be wounded by Philaster, stays the people who would hold back the murderer's arm, declares that he has done nothing, that it is not he, prays for him, loves him in spite of all, even to the end, as though all his acts were sacred, as if he had power of life and death over her. Ordella devotes herself, that the king, her husband, may have children; [10] she offers herself for a sacrifice, simply, without grand words, with her whole heart:

"*Ordella.* Let it be what it may then, what it dare,
I have a mind will hazard it.
Thierry. But, hark you;
What may that woman merit, makes this blessing?
O. Only her duty, sir.
T. 'Tis terrible!
O. 'Tis so much the more noble.
T. 'Tis full of fearful shadows!
O. So is sleep, sir,
Or anything that's merely ours, and mortal;
We were begotten gods else: but those fears,

[9] Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Fair Maid of the Inn," iv.
[10] Beaumont and Fletcher, "Thierry and Theodoret," "The Maid's Tragedy," "Philaster." See also the part of Lucina in "Valentinian."

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Feeling but once the fires of noble thoughts,
Fly, like the shapes of clouds we form, to nothing.
T. Suppose it death!
O. I do.
T. And endless parting
With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,
With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay reason!
For in the silent grave, no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel, nothing's heard,
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust and endless darkness: and dare you, woman,
Desire this place?
O. 'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest:
Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,
And kings from height of all their painted glories
Fall, like spent exhalations, to this centre. . . .
T. Then you can suffer?
O. As willingly as say it.
T. Martell, a wonder!
Here is a woman that dares die.—Yet, tell me,
Are you a wife?
O. I am, sir.
T. And have children?—
She sighs and weeps!
O. Oh, none, sir.
T. Dare you venture
For a poor barren praise you ne'er shall hear,
To part with these sweet hopes?
O. With all but Heaven." [11]

Is not this prodigious? Can you understand how one human being can thus be separated from herself, forget and lose herself in another? They do so lose themselves, as in an abyss. When they love in vain and without hope, neither reason nor life resist; they languish, grow mad, die like Ophelia. Aspasia, forlorn,

" Walks discontented, with her watry eyes
Bent on the earth. The unfrequented woods
Are her delight; and when she sees a bank
Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell
Her servants what a pretty place it were
To bury lovers in; and make her maids
Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.
She carries with her an infectious grief,
That strikes all her beholders; she will sing
The mournful'st things that ever ear hath heard,

[11] " Thierry and Theodoret," iv. 1.

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And sigh and sing again; and when the rest
Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,
Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room
With laughter, she will with so sad a look
Bring forth a story of the silent death
Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief
Will put in such a phrase, that, ere she end,
She'll send them weeping one by one away." [12]

Like a spectre about a tomb, she wanders forever about the remains of her destroyed love, languishes, grows pale, swoons, ends by causing herself to be killed. Sadder still are those who, from duty or submission, allow themselves to be married while their heart belongs to another. They are not resigned, do not recover, like Pauline in "Polyeucte." They are crushed to death. Penthea, in Ford's "Broken Heart," is as upright, but not so strong, as Pauline; she is the English wife, not the Roman, stoical and calm.[13] She despairs sweetly, silently, and pines to death. In her innermost heart she holds herself married to him to whom she has pledged her soul: it is the marriage of the heart which in her eyes is alone genuine; the other is only disguised adultery. In marrying Bassanes she has sinned against Orgilus; moral infidelity is worse than legal infidelity, and thenceforth she is fallen in her own eyes. She says to her brother:

"Pray, kill me. . . .
Kill me, pray; nay, will ye?
Ithocles. How does thy lord esteem thee?
P. Such an one
As only you have made me; a faith-breaker,
A spotted whore; forgive me, I am one—
In act, not in desires, the gods must witness. . . .
For she's that wife to Orgilus, and lives
In known adultery with Bassanes,
Is, at the best, a whore. Wilt kill me now? . . .
The handmaid to the wages

[12] Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Maid's Tragedy," i.
[13] Pauline says, in Corneille's "Polyeucte" (iii. 2):
"Avant qu'abandonner mon âme à mes douleurs,
Il me faut essayer la force de mes pleurs;
En qualité de femme ou de fille, j'espère
Qu'ils vaincront un époux, ou fléchiront un père.
Que si sur l'un et l'autre ils manquent de pouvoir,
Je ne prendrai conseil que de mon désespoir.
Apprends-moi cependant ce qu'ils ont fait au temple."
We could not find a more reasonable and reasoning woman. So with Éliante, and Henriette in Molière.

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Of country toil, drinks the untroubled streams
With leaping kids, and with the bleating lambs,
And so allays her thirst secure; whiles I
Quench my hot sighs with fleetings of my tears." [14]

With tragic greatness, from the height of her incurable grief, she throws her gaze on life:

" My glass of life, sweet princess, hath few minutes
Remaining to run down; the sands are spent;
For by an inward messenger I feel
The summons of departure short and certain. . . . Glories
Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams,
And shadows soon decaying; on the stage
Of my mortality, my youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length
By varied pleasures, sweeten'd in the mixture,
But tragical in issue. . . That remedy
Must be a winding-sheet, a fold of lead,
And some untrod-on corner in the earth." [15]

There is no revolt, no bitterness; she affectionately assists her brother who has caused her unhappiness; she tries to enable him to win the woman he loves; feminine kindness and sweetness overflow in her in the depths of her despair. Love here is not despotic, passionate, as in southern climes. It is only deep and sad; the source of life is dried up, that is all; she lives no longer, because she cannot; all go by degrees—health, reason, soul; in the end she becomes mad, and behold her dishevelled, with wide staring eyes, with words that can hardly find utterance. For ten days she has not slept, and will not eat any more; and the same fatal thought continually afflicts her heart, amidst vague dreams of maternal tenderness and happiness brought to nought, which come and go in her mind like phantoms:

" Sure, if we were all sirens, we would sing pitifully,
And 'twere a comely music, when in parts
One sung another's knell; the turtle sighs
When he hath lost his mate; and yet some say
He must be dead first: 'tis a fine deceit
To pass away in a dream! indeed, I've slept
With mine eyes open, a great while. No falsehood
Equals a broken faith; there's not a hair

[14] Ford's " Broken Heart," iii. 2. [15] Ibid. 5.

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Sticks on my head, but, like a leaden plummet,
It sinks me to the grave: I must creep thither;
The journey is not long. . . .
Since I was first a wife, I might have been
Mother to many pretty prattling babes;
They would have smiled when I smiled; and, for certain,
I should have cried when they cried:—truly, brother,
My father would have pick'd me out a husband,
And then my little ones had been no bastards;
But 'tis too late for me to marry now,
I'm past child-bearing; 'tis not my fault. . . .
Spare your hand;
Believe me, I'll not hurt it. . . .
Complain not though I wring it hard: I'll kiss it,
Oh, 'tis a fine soft palm!—hark, in thine ear;
Like whom do I look, prithee?—nay, no whispering,
Goodness! we had been happy; too much happiness
Will make folk proud, they say. . . .
There is no peace left for a ravish'd wife,
Widow'd by lawless marriage; to all memory
Penthea's, poor Penthea's name is strumpeted. . . .
Forgive me; Oh! I faint." [16]

She dies, imploring that some gentle voice may sing her a plaintive air, a farewell ditty, a sweet funeral song. I know nothing in the drama more pure and touching.

When we find a constitution of soul so new, and capable of such great effects, it behooves us to look at the bodies. Man's extreme actions come not from his will, but his nature.[17] In order to understand the great tensions of the whole machine, we must look upon the whole—I mean man's temperament, the manner in which his blood flows, his nerves quiver, his muscles act, the moral interprets the physical, and human qualities have their root in the animal species. Consider then the species in this case—namely, the race; for the sisters of Shakespeare's Ophelia and Virgilia, Goethe's Clara and Margaret, Otway's Belvidera, Richardson's Pamela, constitute a race by themselves, soft and fair, with blue eyes, lily whiteness, blushing, of timid delicacy, serious sweetness, framed to yield, bend, cling. Their poets feel it clearly when they bring them on the stage; they surround them with the poetry which becomes them, the

[16] Ford's "Broken Heart," iv. 2.
[17] Schopenhauer, "Metaphysics of Love and Death." Swift also said that death and love are the two things in which man is fundamentally irrational. In fact, it is the species and the instinct which are displayed in them, not the will and the individual.

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murmur of streams, the pendant willow-tresses, the frail and humid flowers of the country, so like themselves:

> " The flower, that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
> The azure harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
> The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
> Out-sweeten'd not thy breath." [18]

They make them sweet, like the south wind, which with its gentle breath causes the violets to bend their heads, abashed at the slightest reproach, already half bowed down by a tender and dreamy melancholy.[19] Philaster, speaking of Euphrasia, whom he takes to be a page, and who has disguised herself in order to be near him, says:

> " Hunting the buck,
> I found him sitting by a fountain-side,
> Of which he borrow'd some to quench his thirst,
> And paid the nymph again as much in tears.
> A garland lay him by, made by himself,
> Of many several flowers, bred in the bay,
> Stuck in that mystic order, that the rareness
> Delighted me: But ever when he turn'd
> His tender eyes upon 'em, he would weep,
> As if he meant to make 'em grow again.
> Seeing such pretty helpless innocence
> Dwell in his face, I asked him all his story.
> He told me, that his parents gentle dy'd,
> Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,
> Which gave him roots; and of the crystal springs,
> Which did not stop their courses; and the sun,
> Which still, he thank'd him, yielded him his light.
> Then he took up his garland, and did shew
> What every flower, as country people hold,
> Did signify; and how all, order'd thus,
> Express'd his grief: And, to my thoughts, did read
> The prettiest lecture of his country art
> That could be wish'd. . . . I gladly entertain'd him,
> Who was as glad to follow; and have got
> The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy
> That ever master kept." [20]

The idyl is self-produced among these human flowers: the dramatic action is stopped before the angelic sweetness of their tenderness and modesty. Sometimes even the idyl is born com-

[18] " Cymbeline," iv. 2.
[19] The death of Ophelia, the obsequies of Imogen.
[20] " Philaster," i.

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plete and pure, and the whole theatre is occupied by a sentimental and poetical kind of opera. There are two or three such plays in Shakespeare; in rude Jonson, "The Sad Shepherd"; in Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess." Ridiculous titles nowadays, for they remind us of the interminable platitudes of d'Urfé, or the affected conceits of Florian; charming titles, if we note the sincere and overflowing poetry which they contain. Amoret, the faithful shepherdess, lives in an imaginary country, full of old gods, yet English, like the dewy verdant landscapes in which Rubens sets his nymphs dancing:

"Thro' yon same bending plain
That flings his arms down to the main,
And thro' these thick woods, have I run,
Whose bottom never kiss'd the sun
Since the lusty spring began." . . .

"For to that holy wood is consecrate
A virtuous well, about whose flow'ry banks
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds,
By the pale moon-shine, dipping oftentimes
Their stolen children, so to make them free
From dying flesh, and dull mortality. . . ." [21]

"See the dew-drops, how they kiss
Ev'ry little flower that is;
Hanging on their velvet heads,
Like a rope of christal beads.
See the heavy clouds low falling,
And bright Hesperus down calling
The dead Night from underground." [22]

These are the plants and the aspects of the ever fresh English country, now enveloped in a pale diaphanous mist, now glistening under the absorbing sun, teeming with grasses so full of sap, so delicate, that in the midst of their most brilliant splendor and their most luxuriant life, we feel that to-morrow will wither them. There, on a summer night, the young men and girls, after their custom,[23] go to gather flowers and plight their troth. Amoret and Perigot are together; Amoret,

"Fairer far
Than the chaste blushing morn, or that fair star
That guides the wand'ring seaman thro' the deep,"

[21] Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess," i.
[22] Ibid. ii.
[23] See the description in Nathan Drake, "Shakspeare and his Times."

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modest like a virgin, and tender as a wife, says to Perigot:

> "I do believe thee: 'Tis as hard for me
> To think thee false, and harder, than for thee
> To hold me foul." [24]

Strongly as she is tried, her heart, once given, never draws back. Perigot, deceived, driven to despair, persuaded that she is unchaste, strikes her with his sword, and casts her bleeding to the ground. The "sullen shepherd" throws her into a well; but the god lets fall "a drop from his watery locks" into the wound; the chaste flesh closes at the touch of the divine water, and the maiden, recovering, goes once more in search of him she loves:

> "Speak, if thou be here,
> My Perigot! Thy Amoret, thy dear,
> Calls on thy loved name. . . . 'Tis thy friend,
> Thy Amoret; come hither, to give end
> To these consumings. Look up, gentle boy,
> I have forgot those pains and dear annoy
> I suffer'd for thy sake, and am content
> To be thy love again. Why hast thou rent
> Those curled locks, where I have often hung
> Ribbons, and damask-roses, and have flung
> Waters distill'd to make thee fresh and gay,
> Sweeter than nosegays on a bridal day?
> Why dost thou cross thine arms, and hang thy face
> Down to thy bosom, letting fall apace,
> From those two little Heav'ns, upon the ground,
> Show'rs of more price, more orient, and more round,
> Than those that hang upon the moon's pale brow?
> Cease these complainings, shepherd! I am now
> The same I ever was, as kind and free,
> And can forgive before you ask of me:
> Indeed, I can and will." [25]

Who could resist her sweet and sad smile? Still deceived, Perigot wounds her again; she falls, but without anger.

> "So this work hath end!
> Farewell, and live! be constant to thy friend
> That loves thee next." [26]

A nymph cures her, and at last Perigot, disabused, comes and

[24] Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess," i.
[25] Ibid. iv.
[26] Ibid.

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throws himself on his knees before her. She stretches out her arms; in spite of all that he had done, she was not changed:

> "I am thy love,
> Thy Amoret, for evermore thy love!
> Strike once more on my naked breast, I'll prove
> As constant still. Oh, could'st thou love me yet,
> How soon could I my former griefs forget!" [27]

Such are the touching and poetical figures which these poets introduce in their dramas, or in connection with their dramas, amidst murders, assassinations, the clash of swords, the howl of slaughter, striving against the raging men who adore or torment them, like them carried to excess, transported by their tenderness as the others by their violence; it is a complete exposition, as well as a perfect opposition of the feminine instinct ending in excessive self-abandonment, and of masculine harshness ending in murderous inflexibility. Thus built up and thus provided, the drama of the age was enabled to bring out the inner depths of man, and to set in motion the most powerful human emotions; to bring upon the stage Hamlet and Lear, Ophelia and Cordelia, the death of Desdemona and the butcheries of Macbeth.

[27] Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess," v. Compare, as an illustration of the contrast of races, the Italian pastorals, Tasso's "Aminta," Guarini's "Il Pastor fido," etc.

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CHAPTER THIRD

BEN JONSON

Section I.—The Man.—His Life

WHEN a new civilization brings a new art to light, there are about a dozen men of talent who partly express the general idea, surrounding one or two men of genius who express it thoroughly. Guillen de Castro, Perez de Montalvan, Tirzo de Molina, Ruiz de Alarcon, Agustin Moreto, surrounding Calderon and Lope de Vega; Crayer, Van Oost, Rombouts, Van Thulden, Vandyke, Honthorst, surrounding Rubens; Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, Webster, Beaumont, Fletcher, surrounding Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The first constitute the chorus, the others are the leading men. They sing the same piece together, and at times the chorist is equal to the solo artist; but only at times. Thus, in the dramas which I have just referred to, the poet occasionally reaches the summit of his art, hits upon a complete character, a burst of sublime passion; then he falls back, gropes amid qualified successes, rough sketches, feeble imitations, and at last takes refuge in the tricks of his trade. It is not in him, but in great men like Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, that we must look for the attainment of his idea and the fulness of his art. "Numerous were the wit-combats," says Fuller, "betwixt him (Shakespeare) and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention." [1] Such was Ben Jonson

[1] Fuller's "Worthies," ed. Nuttall, 1840, 3 vols. iii. 284.

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physically and morally, and his portraits do but confirm this just and animated outline: a vigorous, heavy, and uncouth person; a broad and long face, early disfigured by scurvy, a square jaw, large cheeks; his animal organs as much developed as those of his intellect: the sour aspect of a man in a passion or on the verge of a passion; to which add the body of an athlete, about forty years of age, "mountain belly, ungracious gait." Such was the outside, and the inside is like it. He was a genuine Englishman, big and coarsely framed, energetic, combative, proud, often morose, and prone to strange splenetic imaginations. He told Drummond that for a whole night he imagined "that he saw the Carthaginians and Romans fighting on his great toe."[2] Not that he is melancholic by nature; on the contrary, he loves to escape from himself by free and noisy, unbridled merriment, by copious and varied converse, assisted by good Canary wine, which he imbibes, and which ends by becoming a necessity to him. These great phlegmatic butchers' frames require a generous liquor to give them a tone, and to supply the place of the sun which they lack. Expansive moreover, hospitable, even lavish, with a frank imprudent spirit,[3] making him forget himself wholly before Drummond, his Scotch host, an over-rigid and malicious pedant, who has marred his ideas and vilified his character.[4] What we know of his life is in harmony with his person; he suffered much, fought much, dared much. He was studying at Cambridge, when his stepfather, a bricklayer, recalled him, and taught him to use the trowel. He ran away, enlisted as a common soldier, and served in the English army, at that time engaged against the Spaniards in the Low Countries, killed and despoiled a man in single combat, "in the view of both armies." He was a man of bodily action, and he exercised his limbs in early life.[5] On his return to England, at the age of nineteen, he went on the

[2] There is a similar hallucination to be met with in the life of Lord Castlereagh, who afterwards committed suicide.

[3] His character lies between those of Fielding and Dr. Johnson.

[4] Mr. David Laing remarks, however, in Drummond's defence, that as "Jonson died August 6, 1637, Drummond survived till December 4, 1649, and no portion of these Notes (Conversations) were made public till 1711, or sixty-two years after Drummond's death, and seventy-four after Jonson's, which renders quite nugatory all Gifford's accusations of Drummond's having published them 'without shame.' As to Drummond decoying Jonson under his roof with any premeditated design on his reputation, as Mr. Campbell has remarked, no one can seriously believe it."—"Archæologica Scotica," vol. iv. page 243.—Tr.

[5] At the age of forty-four he went to Scotland on foot.

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stage for his livelihood, and occupied himself also in touching up dramas. Having been challenged, he fought a duel, was seriously wounded, but killed his adversary; for this he was cast into prison, and found himself "nigh the gallows." A Catholic priest visited and converted him; quitting his prison penniless, at twenty years of age, he married. At last, four years later, his first successful play was acted. Children came, he must earn bread for them; and he was not inclined to follow the beaten track to the end, being persuaded that a fine philosophy—a special nobleness and dignity—ought to be introduced into comedy—that it was necessary to follow the example of the ancients, to imitate their severity and their accuracy, to be above the theatrical racket and the common improbabilities in which the vulgar delighted. He openly proclaimed his intention in his prefaces, sharply railed at his rivals, proudly set forth on the stage[6] his doctrines, his morality, his character. He thus made bitter enemies, who defamed him outrageously and before their audiences, whom he exasperated by the violence of his satires, and against whom he struggled without intermission to the end. He did more, he constituted himself a judge of the public corruption, sharply attacked the reigning vices, "fearing no strumpet's drugs, nor ruffian's stab."[7] He treated his hearers like schoolboys, and spoke to them always like a censor and a master. If necessary, he ventured further. His companions, Marston and Chapman, had been committed to prison for some reflections on the Scotch in one of their pieces called "Eastward-Hoe"; and the report spreading that they were in danger of losing their noses and ears, Jonson, who had written part of the piece, voluntarily surrendered himself a prisoner, and obtained their pardon. On his return, amid the feasting and rejoicing, his mother showed him a violent poison which she intended to put into his drink, to save him from the execution of the sentence; and "to show that she was not a coward," adds Jonson, "she had resolved to drink first." We see that in vigorous actions he found examples in his own family. Toward the end of his life, money was scarce with him; he was liberal, improvident; his pockets always had holes in them, and his hand was always ready to give; though he had written a vast quan-

[6] Parts of "Crites" and "Asper."

[7] "Every Man out of his Humour," i.; Gifford's "Jonson," p. 30.

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tity, he was still obliged to write in order to live. Paralysis came on, his scurvy became worse, dropsy set in. He could not leave his room, nor walk without assistance. His last plays did not succeed. In the epilogue to the "New Inn" he says:

> "If you expect more than you had to-night,
> The maker is sick and sad. . . .
> All that his faint and falt'ring tongue doth crave,
> Is, that you not impute it to his brain,
> That's yet unhurt, altho, set round with pain,
> It cannot long hold out."

His enemies brutally insulted him:

> "Thy Pegasus . . .
> He had bequeathed his belly unto thee,
> To hold that little learning which is fled
> Into thy guts from out thy emptye head."

Inigo Jones, his colleague, deprived him of the patronage of the court. He was obliged to beg a supply of money from the Lord Treasurer, then from the Earl of Newcastle:

> "Disease, the enemy, and his engineers,
> Want, with the rest of his concealed compeers,
> Have cast a trench about me, now five years. . . .
> The muse not peeps out, one of hundred days;
> But lies blocked up and straitened, narrowed in,
> Fixed to the bed and boards, unlike to win
> Health, or scarce breath, as she had never been." [8]

His wife and children were dead; he lived alone, forsaken, waited on by an old woman. Thus almost always sadly and miserably is dragged out and ends the last act of the human comedy. After so many years, after so many sustained efforts, amid so much glory and genius, we find a poor shattered body, drivelling and suffering, between a servant and a priest.

Section II.—His Freedom and Precision of Style

This is the life of a combatant, bravely endured, worthy of the seventeenth century by its crosses and its energy; courage and force abounded throughout. Few writers have labored more, and more conscientiously; his knowledge was vast, and

[8] Ben Jonson's Poems, ed. Bell, An Epistle Mendicant, to Richard, Lord Weston, Lord High Treasurer (1631), p. 244.

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in this age of eminent scholars he was one of the best classics of his time, as deep as he was accurate and thorough, having studied the most minute details and understood the true spirit of ancient life. It was not enough for him to have stored his mind from the best writers, to have their whole works continually in his mind, to scatter his pages whether he would or no, with recollections of them. He dug into the orators, critics, scholiasts, grammarians, and compilers of inferior rank; he picked up stray fragments; he took characters, jokes, refinements, from Athenæus, Libanius, Philostratus. He had so well entered into and digested the Greek and Latin ideas, that they were incorporated with his own. They enter into his speech without incongruity; they spring forth in him as vigorous as at their first birth; he originates even when he remembers. On every subject he had this thirst for knowledge, and this gift of mastering knowledge. He knew alchemy when he wrote the "Alchemist." He is familiar with alembics, retorts, receivers, as if he had passed his life seeking after the philosopher's stone. He explains incineration, calcination, imbibition, rectification, reverberation, as well as Agrippa and Paracelsus. If he speaks of cosmetics,[1] he brings out a shopful of them; we might make out of his plays a dictionary of the oaths and costumes of courtiers; he seems to have a specialty in all branches. A still greater proof of his force is, that his learning in no wise mars his vigor; heavy as is the mass with which he loads himself, he carries it without stooping. This wonderful mass of reading and observation suddenly begins to move, and falls like a mountain on the overwhelmed reader. We must hear Sir Epicure Mammon unfold the vision of splendors and debauchery, in which he means to plunge, when he has learned to make gold. The refined and unchecked impurities of the Roman decadence, the splendid obscenities of Heliogabalus, the gigantic fancies of luxury and lewdness, tables of gold spread with foreign dainties, draughts of dissolved pearls, nature devastated to provide a single dish, the many crimes committed by sensuality against nature, reason, and justice, the delight in defying and outraging law—all these images pass before the eyes with the dash of a torrent and the force of a great river. Phrase follows phrase without intermission, ideas and facts

[1] "The Devil is an Ass."

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crowd into the dialogue to paint a situation, to give clearness to a character, produced from this deep memory, directed by this solid logic, launched by this powerful reflection. It is a pleasure to see him advance weighted with so many observations and recollections, loaded with technical details and learned reminiscences, without deviation or pause, a genuine literary Leviathan, like the war elephants which used to bear towers, men, weapons, machines, on their backs, and ran as swiftly with their freight as a nimble steed.

In the great dash of this heavy attempt, he finds a path which suits him. He has his style. Classical erudition and education made him a classic, and he writes like his Greek models and his Roman masters. The more we study the Latin races and literatures in contrast with the Teutonic, the more fully we become convinced that the proper and distinctive gift of the first is the art of development; that is, of drawing up ideas in continuous rows, according to the rules of rhetoric and eloquence, by studied transitions, with regular progress, without shock or bounds. Jonson received from his acquaintance with the ancients the habit of decomposing ideas, unfolding them bit by bit in natural order, making himself understood and believed. From the first thought to the final conclusion, he conducts the reader by a continuous and uniform ascent. The track never fails with him as with Shakespeare. He does not advance like the rest by abrupt intuitions, but by consecutive deductions; we can walk with him without need of bounding, and we are continually kept upon the straight path: antithesis of words unfolds antithesis of thoughts; symmetrical phrases guide the mind through difficult ideas; they are like barriers set on either side of the road to prevent our falling into the ditch. We do not meet on our way extraordinary, sudden, gorgeous images, which might dazzle or delay us; we travel on, enlightened by moderate and sustained metaphors. Jonson has all the methods of Latin art; even, when he wishes it, especially on Latin subjects, he has the last and most erudite, the brilliant conciseness of Seneca and Lucan, the squared, equipoised, filed-off antithesis, the most happy and studied artifices of oratorical architecture.[2] Other poets are nearly visionaries; Jonson is almost a logician.

[2] Sejanus, Catiline, passim.

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Hence his talent, his successes, and his faults: if he has a better style and better plots than the others, he is not, like them, a creator of souls. He is too much of a theorist, too preoccupied by rules. His argumentative habits spoil him when he seeks to shape and motion complete and living men. No one is capable of fashioning these unless he possesses, like Shakespeare, the imagination of a seer. The human being is so complex that the logician who perceives his different elements in succession can hardly study them all, much less gather them all in one flash, so as to produce the dramatic response or action in which they are concentrated and which should manifest them. To discover such actions and responses, we need a kind of inspiration and fever. Then the mind works as in a dream. The characters move within the poet, almost involuntarily: he waits for them to speak, he remains motionless, hearing their voices, wholly wrapt in contemplation, in order that he may not disturb the inner drama which they are about to act in his soul. That is his artifice: to let them alone. He is quite astonished at their discourse; as he observes them he forgets that it is he who invents them. Their mood, character, education, disposition of mind, situation, attitude, and actions, form within him so well-connected a whole, and so readily unite into palpable and solid beings, that he dares not attribute to his reflection or reasoning a creation so vast and speedy. Beings are organized in him as in nature; that is, of themselves, and by a force which the combinations of his art could not replace.[8] Jonson has nothing wherewith to replace it but these combinations of art. He chooses a general idea—cunning, folly, severity—and makes a person out of it. This person is called Crites, Asper, Sordido, Deliro, Pecunia, Subtil, and the transparent name indicates the logical process which produced it. The poet took an abstract quality, and putting together all the actions to which it may give rise, trots it out on the stage in a man's dress. His characters, like those of La Bruyère and Theophrastus, were hammered out of solid deductions. Now it is a vice selected from the catalogue of moral philosophy, sensuality thirsting for gold: this perverse double inclination becomes a personage, Sir Epicure Mammon; before the alchemist, before the famulus, before his friend, before his mistress, in public or alone, all his words denote a greed

[8] Alfred de Musset, preface to "La Coupe et les Lèvres." Plato: "Ion."

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of pleasure and of gold, and they express nothing more.[4] Now it is a mania gathered from the old sophists, a babbling with horror of noise; this form of mental pathology becomes a personage, Morose; the poet has the air of a doctor who has undertaken to record exactly all the desires of speech, all the necessities of silence, and to record nothing else. Now he picks out a ridicule, an affectation, a species of folly, from the manners of the dandies and the courtiers; a mode of swearing, an extravagant style, a habit of gesticulating, or any other oddity contracted by vanity or fashion. The hero whom he covers with these eccentricities is overloaded by them. He disappears beneath his enormous trappings; he drags them about with him everywhere; he cannot get rid of them for an instant. We no longer see the man under the dress; he is like a manikin, oppressed under a cloak, too heavy for him. Sometimes, doubtless, his habits of geometrical construction produce personages almost life-like. Bobadil, the grave boaster; Captain Tucca, the begging bully, inventive buffoon, ridiculous talker; Amorphus the traveller, a pedantic doctor of good manners, laden with eccentric phrases, create as much illusion as we can wish; but it is because they are flitting comicalities and low characters. It is not necessary for a poet to study such creatures; it is enough that he discovers in them three or four leading features; it is of little consequence if they always present themselves with the same attitudes; they produce laughter, like the Countess d'Escarbagans or any of the Fâcheux in Molière; we want nothing else of them. On the contrary, the others weary and repel us. They are stage-masks, not living figures. Having acquired a fixed expression, they persist to the end of the piece in their unvarying grimace or their eternal frown. A man is not an abstract passion. He stamps the vices and virtues which he possesses with his individual mark. These vices and virtues receive, on entering into him, a bent and form which they have not in others. No one is unmixed sensuality. Take a thousand sensualists, and you will find a thousand different modes of sensuality; for there are a thousand paths, a thousand circumstances and degrees, in sensuality. If Jonson wanted to make Sir Epicure Mammon a real being, he should have given him

[4] Compare Sir Epicure Mammon with Baron Hulot from Balzac's "Cousine Bette." Balzac, who is learned like Jonson, creates real beings like Shakespeare.

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the kind of disposition, the species of education, the manner of imagination, which produce sensuality. When we wish to construct a man, we must dig down to the foundations of mankind; that is, we must define to ourselves the structure of his bodily machine, and the primitive gait of his mind. Jonson has not dug sufficiently deep, and his constructions are incomplete; he has built on the surface, and he has built but a single story. He was not acquainted with the whole man and he ignored man's basis; he put on the stage and gave a representation of moral treatises, fragments of history, scraps of satire; he did not stamp new beings on the imagination of mankind.

He possesses all other gifts, and in particular the classical; first of all, the talent for composition. For the first time we see a connected, well-contrived plot, a complete intrigue, with its beginning, middle, and end; subordinate actions well arranged, well combined; an interest which grows and never flags; a leading truth which all the events tend to demonstrate; a ruling idea which all the characters unite to illustrate; in short, an art like that which Molière and Racine were about to apply and teach. He does not, like Shakespeare, take a novel from Greene, a chronicle from Holinshed, a life from Plutarch, such as they are, to cut them into scenes, irrespective of likelihood, indifferent as to order and unity, caring only to set up men, at times wandering into poetic reveries, at need finishing up the piece abruptly with a recognition or a butchery. He governs himself and his characters; he wills and he knows all that they do, and all that he does. But beyond his habits of Latin regularity, he possesses the great faculty of his age and race—the sentiment of nature and existence, the exact knowledge of precise detail, the power in frankly and boldly handling frank passions. This gift is not wanting in any writer of the time; they do not fear words that are true, shocking, and striking details of the bedchamber or medical study; the prudery of modern England and the refinement of monarchical France veil not the nudity of their figures, or dim the coloring of their pictures. They live freely, amply, amidst living things; they see the ins and outs of lust raging without any feeling of shame, hypocrisy, or palliation; and they exhibit it as they see it, Jonson as boldly as the rest, occasionally more boldly than the rest, strengthened as he is by the vigor and ruggedness of his athletic tempera-

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ment, by the extraordinary exactness and abundance of his observations and his knowledge. Add also his moral loftiness, his asperity, his powerful chiding wrath, exasperated and bitter against vice, his will strengthened by pride and by conscience:

> "With an armed and resolved hand,
> I'll strip the ragged follies of the time
> Naked as at their birth . . . and with a whip of steel,
> Print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.
> I fear no mood stampt in a private brow,
> When I am pleas'd t' unmask a public vice.
> I fear no strumpet's drugs, nor ruffian's stab,
> Should I detect their hateful luxuries;" [5]

above all, a scorn of base compliance, an open disdain for

> "Those jaded wits
> That run a broken pace for common hire," [6]

an enthusiasm, or deep love of

> "A happy muse,
> Borne on the wings of her immortal thought,
> That kicks at earth with a disdainful heel,
> And beats at heaven gates with her bright hoofs." [7]

Such are the energies which he brought to the drama and to comedy; they were great enough to insure him a high and separate position.

Section III.—The Dramas Catiline and Sejanus

For whatever Jonson undertakes, whatever be his faults, haughtiness, rough-handling, predilection for morality and the past, antiquarian and censorious instincts, he is never little or dull. It signifies nothing that in his latinized tragedies, "Sejanus," "Catiline," he is fettered by the worship of the old worn models of the Roman decadence; nothing that he plays the scholar, manufactures Ciceronian harangues, hauls in choruses imitated from Seneca, holds forth in the style of Lucan and the rhetors of the empire; he more than once attains a genuine accent; through his pedantry, heaviness, literary adoration of the ancients, nature forces its way; he lights, at his first at-

[5] "Every Man out of his Humour," Prologue.
[6] "Poetaster," i. 1.
[7] Ibid.

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tempt, on the crudities, horrors, gigantic lewdness, shameless depravity of imperial Rome; he takes in hand and sets in motion the lusts and ferocities, the passions of courtesans and princesses, the daring of assassins and of great men, which produced Messalina, Agrippina, Catiline, Tiberius.[1] In the Rome which he places before us we go boldly and straight to the end; justice and pity oppose no barriers. Amid these customs of victors and slaves, human nature is upset, corruption and villany are held as proofs of insight and energy. Observe how, in "Sejanus," assassination is plotted and carried out with marvellous coolness. Livia discusses with Sejanus the methods of poisoning her husband, in a clear style, without circumlocution, as if the subject were how to gain a lawsuit or to serve up a dinner. There are no equivocations, no hesitation, no remorse in the Rome of Tiberius. Glory and virtue consist in power; scruples are for base minds; the mark of a lofty heart is to desire all and to dare all. Macro says rightly:

> "Men's fortune there is virtue; reason their will;
> Their license, law; and their observance, skill.
> Occasion is their foil; conscience, their stain;
> Profit, their lustre; and what else is, vain."[2]

Sejanus addresses Livia thus:

> "Royal lady, . . .
> Yet, now I see your wisdom, judgment, strength,
> Quickness, and will, to apprehend the means
> To your own good and greatness, I protest
> Myself through rarified, and turn'd all aflame
> In your affection."[3]

These are the loves of the wolf and his mate; he praises her for being so ready to kill. And observe in one moment the morals of a prostitute appear behind the manners of the poisoner. Sejanus goes out, and immediately, like a courtesan, Livia turns to her physician, saying:

> "How do I look to-day?
> *Eudemus.* Excellent clear, believe it. This same fucus
> Was well laid on.
> *Livia.* Methinks 'tis here not white.

[1] See the second act of "Catiline."
[2] "The Fall of Sejanus," iii. last scene.
[3] Ibid. ii.

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E. Lend me your scarlet, lady. 'Tis the sun
Hath giv'n some little taint unto the ceruse,
You should have us'd of the white oil I gave you.
Sejanus, for your love! His very name
Commandeth above Cupid or his shafts. . . .
[*Paints her cheeks.*]
"'Tis now well, lady, you should
Use of the dentrifice I prescrib'd you too,
To clear your teeth, and the prepar'd pomatum,
To smooth the skin. A lady cannot be
Too curious of her form, that still would hold
The heart of such a person, made her captive,
As you have his: who, to endear him more
In your clear eye, hath put away his wife . . .
Fair Apicata, and made spacious room
To your new pleasures.
L. Have not we return'd
That with our hate to Drusus, and discovery
Of all his counsels? . . .
E. When will you take some physic, lady?
L. When
I shall, Eudemus: but let Drusus' drug
Be first prepar'd.
E. Were Lygdus made, that's done. . . .
I'll send you a perfume, first to resolve
And procure sweat, and then prepare a bath
To cleanse and clear the cutis; against when
I'll have an excellent new fucus made
Resistive 'gainst the sun, the rain or wind,
Which you shall lay on with a breath or oil,
As you best like, and last some fourteen hours.
This change came timely, lady, for your health." [4]

He ends by congratulating her on her approaching change of husbands; Drusus was injuring her complexion; Sejanus is far preferable; a physiological and practical conclusion. The Roman apothecary kept on the same shelf his medicine-chest, his chest of cosmetics, and his box of poisons.[5]

After this we find one after another all the scenes of Roman life unfolded, the bargain of murder, the comedy of justice, the shamelessness of flattery, the anguish and vacillation of the Senate. When Sejanus wishes to buy a conscience, he questions, jokes, plays round the offer he is about to make, throws it out as if in pleasantry, so as to be able to withdraw it, if need be;

[4] "The Fall of Sejanus," ii.
[5] See "Catiline," Act ii.; a very fine scene, no less plain spoken and animated, on the dissipation of the higher ranks in Rome.

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then, when the intelligent look of the rascal, whom he is trafficking with, shows that he is understood:

> " Protest not,
> Thy looks are vows to me. . . .
> Thou art a man, made to make consuls. Go." [6]

Elsewhere, the senator Latiaris in his own house storms before his friend Sabinus against tyranny, openly expresses a desire for liberty, provoking him to speak. Then two spies who were hid " between the roof and ceiling," cast themselves on Sabinus, crying, " Treason to Cæsar ! " and drag him, with his face covered, before the tribunal, thence to " be thrown upon the Gemonies." [7] So, when the Senate is assembled, Tiberius has chosen beforehand the accusers of Silius, and their parts distributed to them. They mumble in a corner, whilst aloud is heard, in the emperor's presence:

> " Cæsar,
> Live long and happy, great and royal Cæsar;
> The gods preserve thee and thy modesty,
> Thy wisdom and thy innocence. . . .
> Guard
> His meekness, Jove, his piety, his care,
> His bounty." [8]

Then the herald cites the accused; Varro, the consul, pronounces the indictment; Afer hurls upon them his bloodthirsty eloquence: the senators get excited; we see laid bare, as in Tacitus and Juvenal, the depths of Roman servility, hypocrisy, insensibility, the venomous craft of Tiberius. At last, after so many others, the turn of Sejanus comes. The fathers anxiously assemble in the temple of Apollo; for some days past Tiberius has seemed to be trying to contradict himself; one day he appoints the friends of his favorite to high places, and the next day sets his enemies in eminent positions. The senators mark the face of Sejanus, and know not what to anticipate; Sejanus is troubled, then after a moment's cringing is more arrogant than ever. The plots are confused, the rumors contradictory. Macro alone is in the confidence of Tiberius, and soldiers are seen, drawn up at the porch of the temple, ready to enter at the slightest commotion. The formula of convocation is read, and the council marks the names of those who do not respond to the

[6] " The Fall of Sejanus," i. [7] Ibid. iv. [8] Ibid. iii.

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summons; then Regulus addresses them, and announces that Cæsar

> Propounds to this grave Senate, the bestowing
> Upon the man he loves, honor'd Sejanus,
> The tribunitial dignity and power:
> Here are his letters, signed with his signet.
> What pleaseth now the Fathers to be done?"
> "*Senators.* Read, read them, open, publicly read them.
> *Cotta.* Cæsar hath honor'd his own greatness much
> In thinking of this act.
> *Trio.* It was a thought
> Happy, and worthy Cæsar.
> *Latiaris.* And the lord
> As worthy it, on whom it is directed!
> *Haterius.* Most worthy!
> *Sanquinius.* Rome did never boast the virtue
> That could give envy bounds, but his: Sejanus—
> *1st Sen.* Honor'd and noble!
> *2d Sen.* Good and great Sejanus!
> *Præcones.* Silence!"[9]

Tiberius's letter is read. First, long, obscure, and vague phrases, mingled with indirect protestations and accusations, foreboding something and revealing nothing. Suddenly comes an insinuation against Sejanus. The fathers are alarmed, but the next line reassures them. A word or two further on the same insinuation is repeated with greater exactness. "Some there be that would interpret this his public severity to be particular ambition; and that, under a pretext of service to us, he doth but remove his own lets: alleging the strengths he hath made to himself, by the prætorian soldiers, by his faction in court and Senate, by the offices he holds himself, and confers on others, his popularity and dependents, his urging (and almost driving) us to this our unwilling retirement, and lastly, his aspiring to be our son-in-law." The fathers rise: "This is strange!" Their eager eyes are fixed on the letter, on Sejanus, who perspires and grows pale; their thoughts are busy with conjectures, and the words of the letter fall one by one, amidst a sepulchral silence, caught up as they fall with all devouring and attentive eagerness. The senators anxiously weigh the value of these shifty expressions, fearing to compromise them-

[9] "The Fall of Sejanus," v.

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selves with the favorite or with the prince, all feeling that they must understand, if they value their lives.

"'Your wisdoms, conscript fathers, are able to examine, and censure these suggestions. But, were they left to our absolving voice, we durst pronounce them, as we think them, most malicious.'

Senator. O, he has restor'd all; list.

Præco. '*Yet are they offered to be aver'd, and on the lives of the informers.*'" [10]

At this word the letter becomes menacing. Those next Sejanus forsake him. "Sit farther. . . . Let's remove!" The heavy Sanquinius leaps panting over the benches. The soldiers come in; then Macro. And now, at last, the letter orders the arrest of Sejanus.

"*Regulus.* Take him hence;
And all the gods guard Cæsar!
Trio. Take him hence.
Haterius. Hence,
Cotta. To the dungeon with him.
Sanquinius. He deserves it.
Senator. Crown all our doors with bays.
San. And let an ox,
With gilded horns and garlands, straight be led
Unto the Capitol.
Hat. And sacrific'd
To Jove, for Cæsar's safety.
Tri. All our gods
Be present still to Cæsar! . . .
Cot. Let all the traitor's titles be defac'd.
Tri. His images and statues be pull'd down. . . .
Sen. Liberty, liberty, liberty! Lead on,
And praise to Macro that hath saved Rome!" [11]

It is the baying of a furious pack of hounds, let loose at last on him, under whose hand they had crouched, and who had for a long time beaten and bruised them. Jonson discovered in his own energetic soul the energy of these Roman passions; and the clearness of his mind, added to his profound knowledge, powerless to construct characters, furnished him with general ideas and striking incidents, which suffice to depict manners.

[10] "The Fall of Sejanus," v. [11] Ibid.

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Section IV.—Comedies

Moreover, it was to this that he turned his talent. Nearly all his work consists of comedies, not sentimental and fanciful as Shakespeare's, but imitative and satirical, written to represent and correct follies and vices. He introduced a new model; he had a doctrine; his masters were Terence and Plautus. He observes the unity of time and place, almost exactly. He ridicules the authors who, in the same play,

> "Make a child now swaddled, to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
> Past threescore years; or, with three rusty swords,
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars. . . .
> He rather prays you will be pleas'd to see." [1]

He wishes to represent on the stage

> "One such to-day, as other plays shou'd be;
> Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,
> Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please:
> Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeard
> The gentlewomen. . . .
> But deeds, and language, such as men do use. . . .
> You, that have so grac'd monsters, may like men." [2]

Men, as we see them in the streets, with their whims and humors—

> "When some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
> In their confluctions, all to run one way,
> This may be truly said to be a humor." [3]

It is these humors which he exposes to the light, not with the artist's curiosity, but with the moralist's hate:

> "I will scourge those apes,
> And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirror,
> As large as is the stage whereon we act;
> Where they shall see the time's deformity
> Anatomized in every nerve, and sinew,
> With constant courage, and contempt of fear. . . .

[1] "Every Man in his Humour," Prologue. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

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My strict hand
Was made to seize on vice, and with a gripe
Squeeze out the humour of such spongy souls,
As lick up every idle vanity." [4]

Doubtless a determination so strong and decided does violence to the dramatic spirit. Jonson's comedies are not rarely harsh; his characters are too grotesque, laboriously constructed, mere automatons; the poet thought less of producing living beings than of scotching a vice; the scenes get arranged, or are confused together in a mechanical manner; we see the process, we feel the satirical intention throughout; delicate and easy-flowing imitation is absent, as well as the graceful fancy which abounds in Shakespeare. But if Jonson comes across harsh passions, visibly evil and vile, he will derive from his energy and wrath the talent to render them odious and visible, and will produce a "Volpone," a sublime work, the sharpest picture of the manners of the age, in which is displayed the full brightness of evil lusts, in which lewdness, cruelty, love of gold, shamelessness of vice, display a sinister yet splendid poetry, worthy of one of Titian's bacchanals.[5] All this makes itself apparent in the first scene, when Volpone says:

"Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!——
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint."

This saint is his piles of gold, jewels, precious plate:

"Hail the world's soul, and mine! . . . O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
With adoration, thee, and every relick
Of sacred treasure in this blessed room." [6]

Presently after, the dwarf, the eunuch, and the hermaphrodite of the house sing a sort of pagan and fantastic interlude; they chant in strange verses the metamorphoses of the hermaphrodite, who was first the soul of Pythagoras. We are at Venice, in the palace of the magnifico Volpone. These deformed creatures, the splendor of gold, this strange and poetical buffoonery, carry the thought immediately to the sensual city, queen of vices and of arts.

[4] "Every Man out of his Humour," Prologue.

[5] Compare "Volpone" with Regnard's "Légataire"; the end of the sixteenth with the beginning of the eighteenth century.

[6] "Volpone," i. 1.

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The rich Volpone lives like an ancient Greek or Roman. Childless and without relatives, playing the invalid, he makes all his flatterers hope to be his heir, receives their gifts,

> "Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
> And draw it by their mouths, and back again." [7]

Glad to have their gold, but still more glad to deceive them, artistic in wickedness as in avarice, and just as pleased to look at a contortion of suffering as at the sparkle of a ruby.

The advocate Voltore arrives, bearing a "huge piece of plate." Volpone throws himself on his bed, wraps himself in furs, heaps up his pillows, and coughs as if at the point of death:

> "*Volpone.* I thank you, signior Voltore,
> Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad. . . . Your love
> Hath taste in this, and shall not be unanswer'd. . . .
> I cannot now last long. . . . I fell me going—
> Uh, uh, uh, uh!" [8]

He closes his eyes, as though exhausted:

> "*Voltore.* Am I inscrib'd his heir for certain?
> *Mosca* (*Volpone's Parasite*). Are you!
> I do beseech you, sir, you will vouchsafe
> To write me in your family. All my hopes
> Depend upon your worship: I am lost,
> Except the rising sun do shine on me.
> *Volt.* It shall both shine and warm thee, Mosca.
> *M.* Sir,
> I am man, that hath not done your love
> All the worst offices: here I wear your keys,
> See all your coffers and your caskets lock'd,
> Keep the poor inventory of your jewels,
> Your plate and monies; am your steward, sir,
> Husband your goods here.
> *Volt.* But am I sole heir?
> *M.* Without a partner, sir; confirm'd this morning
> The wax is warm yet, and the ink scarce dry
> Upon the parchment.
> *Volt.* Happy, happy me!
> By what good chance, sweet Mosca?
> *M.* Your desert, sir;
> I know no second cause." [9]

[7] "Volpone," i. 1. [8] Ibid. i. 3. [9] Ibid.

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And he details the abundance of the wealth in which Voltore is about to revel, the gold which is to pour upon him, the opulence which is to flow in his house as a river:

> "When will you have your inventory brought, sir?
> Or see a copy of the will?"

The imagination is fed with precise words, precise details. Thus, one after another, the would-be heirs come like beasts of prey. The second who arrives is an old miser, Corbaccio, deaf, "impotent," almost dying, who, nevertheless, hopes to survive Volpone. To make more sure of it, he would fain have Mosca give his master a narcotic. He has it about him, this excellent opiate: he has had it prepared under his own eyes, he suggests it. His joy on finding Volpone more ill than himself is bitterly humorous:

> "*Corbaccio.* How does your patron? . . .
> *Mosca.* His mouth
> Is ever gaping, and his eyelids hang.
> *C.* Good.
> *M.* A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,
> And makes the color of his flesh like lead.
> *C.* 'Tis good.
> *M.* His pulse beats slow, and dull.
> *C.* Good symptoms still.
> *M.* And from his brain—
> *C.* I conceive you; good.
> *M.* Flows a cold sweat, with a continual rheum,
> Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.
> *C.* Is't possible? Yet I am better, ha!
> How does he, with the swimming of his head?
> *M.* O, sir, 'tis past the scotomy; he now
> Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:
> You hardly can perceive him, that he breathes.
> *C.* Excellent, excellent! sure I shall outlast him:
> This makes me young again, a score of years." [10]

If you would be his heir, says Mosca, the moment is favorable, but you must not let yourself be forestalled. Voltore has been here, and presented him with this piece of plate:

> "*C.* See, Mosca, look,
> Here, I have brought a bag of bright chequines,
> Will quite weigh down his plate. . . .

[10] "Volpone," i. 4.

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M. Now, would I counsel you, make home with speed;
There, frame a will; whereto you shall inscribe
My master your sole heir. . . .
C. This plot
Did I think on before. . . .
M. And you so certain to survive him—
C. Ay.
M. Being so lusty a man—
C. 'Tis true." [11]

And the old man hobbles away, not hearing the insults and ridicule thrown at him, he is so deaf.

When he is gone the merchant Corvino arrives, bringing an orient pearl and a splendid diamond:

"*Corvino.* Am I his heir?
Mosca. Sir, I am sworn, I may not show the will
Till he be dead; but here has been Corbaccio,
Here has been Voltore, here were others too,
I cannot number 'em, they were so many;
All gaping here for legacies: but I,
Taking the vantage of his naming you,
Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino, took
Paper, and pen, and ink, and there I asked him,
Whom he would have his heir? Corvino. Who
Should be executor? Corvino. And,
To any question he was silent to,
I still interpreted the nods he made,
Through weakness, for consent: and sent home th' others,
Nothing bequeath'd them, but to cry and curse.
Cor. O my dear Mosca! . . . Has he children?
M. Bastards,
Some dozen, or more, that he begot on beggars,
Gypsies, and Jews, and black-moors, when he was drunk. . . .
Speak out:
You may be louder yet. . . .
Faith, I could stifle him rarely with a pillow,
As well as any woman that should keep him.
C. Do as you will; but I'll begone." [12]

Corvino presently departs; for the passions of the time have all the beauty of frankness. And Volpone, casting aside his sick man's garb, cries:

"My divine Mosca!
Thou hast to-day out gone thyself. . . . Prepare
Me music, dances, banquets, all delights;

[11] "Volpone," i. 4. [12] Ibid. i. 5.

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The Turk is not more sensual in his pleasures,
Than will Volpone." [13]

On this invitation, Mosca draws a most voluptuous portrait of Corvino's wife, Celia. Smitten with a sudden desire, Volpone dresses himself as a mountebank, and goes singing under her windows with all the sprightliness of a quack; for he is naturally a comedian, like a true Italian, of the same family as Scaramouch, as good an actor in the public square as in his house. Having once seen Celia, he resolves to obtain her at any price:

" Mosca, take my keys,
Gold, plate, and jewels, all's at thy devotion;
Employ them how thou wilt; nay, coin me too:
So thou, in this, but crown my longings, Mosca." [14]

Mosca then tells Corvino that some quack's oil has cured his master, and that they are looking for a " young woman, lusty and full of juice," to complete the cure:

" Have you no kinswoman?
Odso—Think, think, think, think, think, think, think, sir.
One o' the doctors offer'd there his daughter.
Corvino. How!
Mosca. Yes, signior Lupo, the physician.
C. His daughter!
M. And a virgin, sir. . . .
C. Wretch!
Covetous wretch." [15]

Though unreasonably jealous, Corvino is gradually induced to offer his wife. He has given too much already, and would not lose his advantage. He is like a half-ruined gamester, who with a shaking hand throws on the green cloth the remainder of his fortune. He brings the poor sweet woman, weeping and resisting. Excited by his own hidden pangs, he becomes furious:

" Be damn'd!
Heart, I will drag thee hence, home, by the hair;
Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up
Thy mouth unto thine ears; and slit thy nose;
Like a raw rochet!—Do not tempt me; come,
Yield, I am loth—Death! I will buy some slave
Whom I will kill, and bind thee to him, alive;
And at my window hang you forth, devising

[13] " Volpone," i. 5. [14] Ibid. ii. 2. [15] Ibid.

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Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters,
Will eat into thy flesh with aquafortis,
And burning corsives, on this stubborn breast.
Now, by the blood thou hast incensed, I'll do it!
Celia. Sir, what you please, you may, I am your martyr.
Corvino. Be not thus obstinate, I have not deserv'd it:
Think who it is intreats you. Prithee, sweet;—
Good faith thou shalt have jewels, gowns, attires,
What thou wilt think, and ask. Do but go kiss him,
Or touch him, but. For my sake.—At my suit.—
This once.—No! not! I shall remember this.
Will you disgrace me thus? Do you thirst my undoing?" [16]

Mosca turned a moment before, to Volpone:

" Sir,
Signior Corvino . . . hearing of the consultation had
So lately, for your health, is come to offer,
Or rather, sir, to prostitute.—
Corvino. Thanks, sweet Mosca.
Mosca. Freely, unask'd, or unintreated.
C. Well.
Mosca. As the true fervent instance of his love,
His own most fair and proper wife; the beauty
Only of price in Venice.—
C. 'Tis well urg'd." [17]

Where can we see such blows launched and driven hard, full in the face, by the violent hand of satire? Celia is alone with Volpone, who, throwing off his feigned sickness, comes upon her " as fresh, as hot, as high, and in as jovial plight," as on the gala days of the Republic, when he acted the part of the lovely Antinous. In his transport he sings a love-song; his voluptuousness culminates in poetry; for poetry was then in Italy the blossom of vice. He spreads before her pearls, diamonds, carbuncles. He is in raptures at the sight of the treasures, which he displays and sparkles before her eyes:

" Take these,
And wear, and lose them: yet remains an ear-ring
To purchase them again, and this whole state.
A gem but worth a private patrimony,
Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal,
The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,

[16] " Volpone," iii. 5. We pray the reader to pardon us for Ben Jonson's broadness. If I omit it, I cannot depict the sixteenth century. Grant the same indulgence to the historian as to the anatomist.
[17] Ibid.

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The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
Shall be our food. . . .
Conscience? 'Tis the beggar's virtue. . . .
Thy baths shall be of the juice of July flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath
Gather'd in bags, and mixt with Cretan wines.
Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber;
Which we will take, until my roof whirl round
With the vertigo: and my dwarf shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antic,
Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine;
So, of the rest, till we have quite run through,
And wearied all the fables of the gods." [18]

We recognize Venice in this splendor of debauchery—Venice, the throne of Aretinus, the country of Tintoretto and Giorgione. Volpone seizes Celia: "Yield, or I'll force thee!" But suddenly Bonario, disinherited son of Corbaccio, whom Mosca had concealed there with another design, enters violently, delivers her, wounds Mosca, and accuses Volpone before the tribunal, of imposture and rape.

The three rascals who aim at being his heirs, work together to save Volpone. Corbaccio disavows his son, and accuses him of parricide. Corvino declares his wife an adulteress, the shameless mistress of Bonario. Never on the stage was seen such energy of lying, such open villany. The husband, who knows his wife to be innocent, is the most eager:

"This woman (please your fatherhoods) is a whore,
Of most hot exercise, more than a partrich,
Upon record.
1st Advocate. No more.
Corvino. Neighs like a jennet.
Notary. Preserve the honor of the court.
C. I shall,
And modesty of your most reverend ears.
And yet I hope that I may say, these eyes
Have seen her glued unto that piece of cedar,
That fine well-timber'd gallant; and that here
The letters may be read, thorough the horn,
That make the story perfect. . . .

[18] "Volpone," iii. 5.

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3d Adv. His grief hath made him frantic. (*Celia swoons.*)
C. Rare! Prettily feign'd! again!" [19]

They have Volpone brought in, like a dying man; manufacture false "testimony," to which Voltore gives weight with his advocate's tongue, with words worth a sequin apiece. They throw Celia and Bonario into prison, and Volpone is saved. This public imposture is for him only another comedy, a pleasant pastime, and a masterpiece.

"*Mosca.* To gull the court.
Volpone. And quite divert the torrent
Upon the innocent. . . .
M. You are not taken with it enough, methinks.
V. O, more than if I had enjoy'd the wench?" [20]

To conclude, he writes a will in Mosca's favor, has his death reported, hides behind a curtain, and enjoys the looks of the would-be heirs. They had just saved him from being thrown into prison, which makes the fun all the better; the wickedness will be all the greater and more exquisite. "Torture 'em rarely," Volpone says to Mosca. The latter spreads the will on the table, and reads the inventory aloud. "Turkey carpets nine. Two cabinets, one of ebony, the other mother-of-pearl. A perfum'd box, made of an onyx." The heirs are stupefied with disappointment, and Mosca drives them off with insults. He says to Corvino:

"Why should you stay here? with what thought, what promise?
Hear you; do you not know, I know you an ass,
And that you would most fain have been a wittol,
If fortune would have let you? That you are
A declar'd cuckold, on good terms? This pearl,
You'll say, was yours? Right: this diamond?
I'll not deny't, but thank you. Much here else?
It may be so. Why, think that these good works
May help to hide your bad. [*Exit Corvino.*] . . .
Corbaccio. I am cozen'd, cheated, by a parasite slave;
Harlot, thou hast gull'd me.
Mosca. Yes, sir. Stop your mouth,
Or I shall draw the only tooth is left.
Are not you he, that filthy covetous wretch,
With the three legs, that here, in hope of prey,
Have, any time this three years, snufft about,
With your most grov'ling nose, and would have hir'd

[19] "Volpone," iv. 1. [20] Ibid. v. 1.

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> Me to the pois'ning of my patron, sir?
> Are not you he that have to-day in court
> Profess'd the disinheriting of your son?
> Perjur'd yourself? Go home, and die, and stink." [21]

Volpone goes out disguised, comes to each of them in turn, and succeeds in wringing their hearts. But Mosca, who has the will, acts with a high hand, and demands of Volpone half his fortune. The dispute between the two rascals discovers their impostures, and the master, the servant, with the three would-be heirs, are sent to the galleys, to prison, to the pillory—as Corvino says, to

> " Have mine eyes beat out with stinking fish,
> Bruis'd fruit, and rotten eggs.—'Tis well. I'm glad,
> I shall not see my shame yet." [22]

No more vengeful comedy has been written, none more persistently athirst to make vice suffer, to unmask, triumph over, and to punish it.

Where can be the gayety of such a theatre? In caricature and farce. There is a rough gayety, a sort of physical, external laughter which suits this combative, drinking, blustering mood. It is thus that this mood relaxes from war-waging and murderous satire; the pastime is appropriate to the manners of the time, excellent to attract men who look upon hanging as a good joke, and laugh to see the Puritan's ears cut. Put yourself for an instant in their place, and you will think like them, that " The Silent Woman " is a masterpiece. Morose is an old monomaniac, who has a horror of noise, but loves to speak. He inhabits a street so narrow that a carriage cannot enter it. He drives off with his stick the bear-leaders and sword-players, who venture to pass under his windows. He has sent away his servant whose shoes creaked; and Mute, the new one, wears slippers " soled with wool," and only speaks in a whisper through a tube. Morose ends by forbidding the whisper, and makes him reply by signs. He is also rich, an uncle, and he ill-treats his nephew Sir Dauphine Eugenie, a man of wit, but who lacks money. We anticipate all the tortures which poor Morose is to suffer. Sir Dauphine finds him a supposed silent woman, the beautiful Epicœne. Morose, enchanted by her brief replies and her voice,

[21] " Volpone," v. 1. [22] Ibid. v. 8.

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which he can hardly hear, marries her, to play his nephew a trick. It is his nephew who has played him a trick. As soon as she is married, Epicœne speaks, scolds, argues as loud and as long as a dozen women: "Why, did you think you had married a statue? or a motion only? one of the French puppets, with the eyes turned with a wire? or some innocent out of the hospital, that would stand with her hands thus, and a plaise mouth, and look upon you?" [23]

She orders the servants to speak louder; she opens the doors wide to her friends. They arrive in shoals, offering their noisy congratulations to Morose. Five or six women's tongues overwhelm him all at once with compliments, questions, advice, remonstrances. A friend of Sir Dauphine comes with a band of music, who play all together, suddenly, with their whole force. Morose says, "O, a plot, a plot, a plot, a plot, upon me! This day I shall be their anvil to work on; they will grate me asunder. 'Tis worse than the noise of a saw." [24] A procession of servants is seen coming, with dishes in their hands; it is the racket of a tavern which Sir Dauphine is bringing to his uncle. The guests clash the glasses, shout, drink healths; they have with them a drum and trumpets which make great noise. Morose flees to the top of the house, puts "a whole nest of night-caps" on his head and stuffs up his ears. Captain Otter cries, "Sound, Tritons o' the Thames! *Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero.*" "Villains, murderers, sons of the earth and traitors," cries Morose from above, "what do you there?" The racket increases. Then the captain, somewhat "jovial," maligns his wife, who falls upon him and gives him a good beating. Blows, cries, music, laughter, resound like thunder. It is the poetry of uproar. Here is a subject to shake coarse nerves, and to make the mighty chests of the companions of Drake and Essex shake with uncontrollable laughter. "Rogues, hell-hounds, Stentors! . . . They have rent my roof, walls, and all my windows asunder, with their brazen throats!" Morose casts himself on his tormentors with his long sword, breaks the instruments, drives away the musicians, disperses the guests amidst an inexpressible uproar, gnashing his teeth, looking haggard. Afterwards they pronounce him mad and discuss his madness

[23] "Epicœne," iii. 2. [24] Ibid. iii. 2.

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before him.[25] The disease in Greek is called *μανία*, in Latin *insania, furor, vel ecstasis melancholica;* that is, *egressio*, when a man *ex melancholico evadit fanaticus*. . . . But he may be but phreneticus yet, mistress; and phrenetis is only delirium, or so." They talk of the books which he must read aloud to cure him. They add, by way of consolation, that his wife talks in her sleep, "and snores like a porpoise." "O redeem me, fate; redeem me, fate!" cries the poor man.[26] "For how many causes may a man be divorced, nephew?" Sir Dauphine chooses two knaves, and disguises them, one as a priest, the other as a lawyer, who launch at his head Latin terms of civil and canon law, explain to Morose the twelve cases of nullity, jingle in his ears one after another the most barbarous words in their obscure vocabulary, wrangle, and make between them as much noise as a couple of bells in a belfry. Following their advice, he declares himself impotent. The wedding-guests propose to toss him in a blanket; others demand an immediate inspection. Fall after fall, shame after shame; nothing serves him; his wife declares that she consents to "take him with all his faults." The lawyer proposes another legal method; Morose shall obtain a divorce by proving that his wife is faithless. Two boasting knights, who are present, declare that they have been her lovers. Morose, in raptures, throws himself at their knees, and embraces them. Epicœne weeps, and Morose seems to be delivered. Suddenly the lawyer decides that the plan is of no avail, the infidelity having been committed before the marriage. "O, this is worst of all worst worsts that hell could have devis'd! marry a whore, and so much noise!" There is Morose then, declared impotent and a deceived husband, at his own request, in the eyes of the whole world, and moreover married forever. Sir Dauphine comes in like a clever rascal, and as a succoring deity. "Allow me but five hundred during life, uncle, and I free you." Morose signs the deed of gift with alacrity; and his nephew shows him that Epicœne is a boy in disguise.[27] Add to this enchanting farce the funny parts of the two accomplished and gallant knights, who, after having boasted of their bravery, receive gratefully, and before the

[25] Compare M. de Pourceaugnac in Molière.

[26] "Epicœne," iv. 1, 2.

[27] Ibid. v.

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ladies, flips and kicks.[28] Never was coarse physical laughter more adroitly produced. In this broad coarse gayety, this excess of noisy transport, you recognize the stout roisterer, the stalwart drinker who swallowed hogsheads of Canary, and made the windows of the Mermaid shake with his bursts of humor.

Section V.—Limits of Jonson's Talent.—His Smaller Poems.—His Masques

Jonson did not go beyond this; he was not a philosopher like Molière, able to grasp and dramatize the crisis of human life, education, marriage, sickness, the chief characters of his country and century, the courtier, the tradesman, the hypocrite, the man of the world.[1] He remained on a lower level, in the comedy of plot,[2] the painting of the grotesque,[3] the representation of too transient subjects of ridicule,[4] too general vices.[5] If at times, as in the "Alchemist," he has succeeded by the perfection of plot and the vigor of satire, he has miscarried more frequently by the ponderousness of his work and the lack of comic lightness. The critic in him mars the artist; his literary calculations strip him of spontaneous invention; he is too much of a writer and moralist, not enough of a mimic and an actor. But he is loftier from another side, for he is a poet; almost all writers, prose-authors, preachers even, were so at the time we speak of. Fancy abounded, as well as the perception of colors and forms, the need and wont of enjoying through the imagination and the eyes. Many of Jonson's pieces, the "Staple of News," "Cynthia's Revels," are fanciful and allegorical comedies like those of Aristophanes. He there dallies with the real, and beyond the real, with characters who are but theatrical masks, abstractions personified, buffooneries, decorations, dances, music, pretty laughing whims of a picturesque and sentimental imagination. Thus, in "Cynthia's Revels," three children come on "pleading possession of the cloke" of black velvet, which an actor usually wore when he spoke the prologue. They draw lots for it; one of the losers, in revenge, tells the

[28] Compare Polichinelle in "Le Malade imaginaire"; Géronte in "Les Fourberies de Scapin."

[1] Compare "L'École des Femmes," "Tartuffe," "Le Misanthrope," "Le Bourgeois-gentilhomme," "Le Malade imaginaire," "Georges Dandin."

[2] Compare "Les Fourberies de Scapin."

[3] Compare "Les Fâcheux."

[4] Compare "Les Précieuses Ridicules."

[5] Compare the plays of Destouches.

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audience beforehand the incidents of the piece. The others interrupt him at every sentence, put their hands on his mouth, and taking the cloak one after the other, begin to criticise the spectators and authors. This child's play, these gestures and loud voices, this little amusing dispute, divert the public from their serious thoughts, and prepare them for the oddities which they are to look upon.

We are in Greece, in the valley of Gargaphie, where Diana [6] has proclaimed "a solemn revels." Mercury and Cupid have come down, and begin by quarrelling; the latter says: "My light feather-heel'd coz, what are you any more than my uncle Jove's pander? a lacquey that runs on errands for him, and can whisper a light message to a loose wench with some round volubility? . . . One that sweeps the gods' drinking-room every morning, and sets the cushions in order again, which they threw one at another's head over night?" [7]

They are good-tempered gods. Echo, awoke by Mercury, weeps for the "too beauteous boy Narcissus":

> "That trophy of self-love, and spoil of nature,
> Who, now transformed into this drooping flower,
> Hangs the repentant head, back from the stream. . . .
> Witness thy youth's dear sweets, here spent untasted,
> Like a fair taper, with his own flame wasted! . . .
> And with thy water let this curse remain,
> As an inseparate plague, that who but taste
> A drop thereof, may, with the instant touch,
> Grow doatingly enamour'd on themselves." [8]

The courtiers and ladies drink thereof, and behold, a sort of a review of the follies of the time, arranged, as in Aristophanes, in an improbable farce, a brilliant show. A silly spendthrift, Asotus, wishes to become a man of the court and of fashionable manners; he takes for his master Amorphus, a learned traveller, expert in gallantry, who, to believe himself, is

> "An essence so sublimated and refined by travel . . . able . . . to speak the mere extraction of language; one that . . . was your first that ever enrich'd his country with the true laws of the duello; whose optics have drunk the spirit of beauty in some eight-score and eighteen princes' courts, where I have resided, and been there fortunate in the amours of three hundred forty and five ladies, all nobly if not

[6] By Diana, Queen Elizabeth is meant.

[7] "Cynthia's Revels," i. 1.

[8] Ibid.

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princely descended, . . . in all so happy, as even admiration herself doth seem to fasten her kisses upon me." [9]

Asotus learns at this good school the language of the court, fortifies himself like other people with quibbles, learned oaths, and metaphors; he fires off in succession supersubtle tirades, and duly imitates the grimaces and tortuous style of his masters. Then, when he has drunk the water of the fountain, becoming suddenly pert and rash, he proposes to all comers a tournament of "court compliment." This odd tournament is held before the ladies; it comprises four jousts, and at each the trumpets sound. The combatants perform in succession "the *bare accost*"; "the *better regard;*" "the *solemn address;*" and "the *perfect close.*" [10] In this grave buffoonery the courtiers are beaten. The severe Crites, the moralist of the play, copies their language, and pierces them with their own weapons. Already, with grand declamation, he had rebuked them thus:

> " O vanity,
> How are thy painted beauties doated on,
> By light, and empty idiots! how pursu'd
> With open and extended appetite!
> How they do sweat, and run themselves from breath,
> Rais'd on their toes, to catch thy airy forms,
> Still turning giddy, till they reel like drunkards,
> That buy the merry madness of one hour,
> With the long irksomeness of following time!" [11]

To complete the overthrow of the vices, appear two symbolical masques, representing the contrary virtues. They pass gravely before the spectators, in splendid array, and the noble verses exchanged by the goddess and her companions raise the mind to the lofty regions of serene morality, whither the poet desires to carry us:

> "Queen, and huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is laid to sleep,
> Seated in thy silver chair,
> State in wonted manner keep. . . .
> Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
> And thy crystal shining quiver;
> Give unto the flying hart
> Space to breathe, how short soever." [12]

[9] "Cynthia's Revels," i. 1.
[10] Ibid. v. 2.
[11] Ibid. i. 1.
[12] Ibid. v. 3.

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In the end, bidding the dancers to unmask, Cynthia shows that the vices have disguised themselves as virtues. She condemns them to make fit reparation, and to bathe themselves in Helicon. Two by two they go off singing a palinode, whilst the chorus sings the supplication "Good Mercury defend us."[13] Is it an opera or a comedy? It is a lyrical comedy; and if we do not discover in it the airy lightness of Aristophanes, at least we encounter, as in the "Birds" and the "Frogs," the contrasts and medleys of poetic invention, which, through caricature and ode, the real and the impossible, the present and the past, sent forth to the four quarters of the globe, simultaneously unites all kinds of incompatibilities, and culls all flowers.

Jonson went further than this, and entered the domain of pure poetry. He wrote delicate, voluptuous, charming love poems, worthy of the ancient idyllic muse.[14] Above all, he was the great, the inexhaustible inventor of Masques, a kind of masquerades, ballets, poetic choruses, in which all the magnificence and the imagination of the English Renaissance is displayed. The Greek gods, and all the ancient Olympus, the allegorical personages whom the artists of the time delineate in their pictures; the antique heroes of popular legends; all worlds, the actual, the abstract, the divine, the human, the ancient, the modern, are searched by his hands, brought on the stage to furnish costumes, harmonious groups, emblems, songs, whatever can excite, intoxicate the artistic sense. The *élite,* moreover, of the kingdom is there on the stage. They are not mountebanks moving about in borrowed clothes, clumsily worn, for which they are still in debt to the tailor; they are ladies of the court, great lords, the queen, in all the splendor of their rank and pride, with real diamonds, bent on displaying their riches, so that the whole splendor of the national life is concentrated in the opera which they enact, like jewels in a casket. What dresses! what profusion of splendors! what medley of strange characters, gipsies, witches, gods, heroes, pontiffs, gnomes, fantastic beings! How many metamorphoses, jousts, dances, marriage songs! What variety of scenery, architecture, floating isles, triumphal arches, symbolic spheres! Gold glitters; jewels flash; purple absorbs the lustre-lights in its costly folds; streams of light shine upon the crumpled silks; diamond neck-

[13] "Cynthia's Revels," last scene.

[14] Celebration of Charis; "Miscellaneous Poems."

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laces, darting flame, clasp the bare bosoms of the ladies; strings of pearls are displayed, loop after loop, upon the silver-sown brocaded dresses; gold embroidery, weaving whimsical arabesques, depicts upon their dresses flowers, fruits, and figures, setting picture within picture. The steps of the throne bear groups of Cupids, each with a torch in his hand.[15] On either side the fountains cast up plumes of pearls; musicians, in purple and scarlet, laurel-crowned, make harmony in the bowers. The trains of masques cross, commingling their groups; "the one half in orange-tawny and silver, the other in sea-green and silver. The bodies and short skirts (were of) white and gold to both."

Such pageants Jonson wrote year after year, almost to the end of his life, true feasts for the eyes, like the processions of Titian. Even when he grew to be old, his imagination, like that of Titian, remained abundant and fresh. Though forsaken, lying gasping on his bed, feeling the approach of death, in his supreme bitterness he did not lose his faculties, but wrote "The Sad Shepherd," the most graceful and pastoral of his pieces. Consider that this beautiful dream arose in a sick-chamber, amidst medicine bottles, physic, doctors, with a nurse at his side, amidst the anxieties of poverty and the choking-fits of a dropsy! He is transported to a green forest, in the days of Robin Hood, amidst the gay chase and the great barking greyhounds. There are the malicious fairies, who, like Oberon and Titania, lead men to flounder in mishaps. There are open-souled lovers, who, like Daphne and Chloe, taste with awe the painful sweetness of the first kiss. There lived Earine, whom the stream has "suck'd in," whom her lover, in his madness, will not cease to lament:

> "Earine,
> Who had her very being, and her name
> With the first knots or buddings of the spring,
> Born with the primrose or the violet,
> Or earliest roses blown: when Cupid smil'd,
> And Venus led the graces out to dance,
> And all the flowers and sweets in nature's lap
> Leap'd out, and made their solemn conjuration
> To last but while she liv'd!" . . .[16]
> "But she, as chaste as was her name, Earine,

[15] "Masque of Beauty." [16] "The Sad Shepherd," i. 2.

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Died undeflower'd: and now her sweet soul hovers
Here in the air above us." [17]

Above the poor old paralytic artist, poetry still hovers like a haze of light. Yes, he had cumbered himself with science, clogged himself with theories, constituted himself theatrical critic and social censor, filled his soul with unrelenting indignation, fostered a combative and morose disposition; but divine dreams never left him. He is the brother of Shakespeare.

Section VI.—General Idea of Shakespeare

So now at last we are in the presence of one, whom we perceived before us through all the vistas of the Renaissance, like some vast oak to which all the forest ways converge. I will treat of Shapespeare by himself. In order to take him in completely, we must have a wide and open space. And yet how shall we comprehend him? how lay bare his inner constitution? Lofty words, eulogies, are all used in vain; he needs no praise, but comprehension merely; and he can only be comprehended by the aid of science. As the complicated revolutions of the heavenly bodies become intelligible only by use of a superior calculus, as the delicate transformations of vegetation and life need for their explanation the intervention of the most difficult chemical formulas, so the great works of art can be interpreted only by the most advanced psychological systems; and we need the loftiest of all these to attain to Shakespeare's level—to the level of his age and his work, of his genius and of his art.

After all practical experience and accumulated observations of the soul, we find as the result that wisdom and knowledge are in man only effects and fortuities. Man has no permanent and distinct force to secure truth to his intelligence, and common-sense to his conduct. On the contrary, he is naturally unreasonable and deceived. The parts of his inner mechanism are like the wheels of clock-work, which go of themselves, blindly, carried away by impulse and weight, and which yet sometimes, by virtue of a certain unison, end by indicating the hour. This final intelligent motion is not natural, but fortuitous; not spontaneous, but forced; not innate, but acquired. The clock did

[17] "The Sad Shepherd," iii. 2.

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not always go regularly; on the contrary, it had to be regulated little by little, with much difficulty. Its regularity is not insured; it may go wrong at any time. Its regularity is not complete; it only approximately marks the time. The mechanical force of each piece is always ready to drag all the rest from their proper action, and to disarrange the whole agreement. So ideas, once in the mind, pull each their own way blindly and separately, and their imperfect agreement threatens confusion every moment. Strictly speaking, man is mad, as the body is ill, by nature; reason and health come to us as a momentary success, a lucky accident.[1] If we forget this, it is because we are now regulated, dulled, deadened, and because our internal motion has become gradually, by friction and reparation, half harmonized with the motion of things. But this is only a semblance; and the dangerous primitive forces remain untamed and independent under the order which seems to restrain them. Let a great danger arise, a revolution take place, they will break out and explode, almost as terribly as in earlier times. For an idea is not a mere inner mark, employed to designate one aspect of things, inert, always ready to fall into order with other similar ones, so as to make an exact whole. However it may be reduced and disciplined, it still retains a sensible tinge which shows its likeness to an hallucination; a degree of individual persistence which shows its likeness to a monomania; a network of singular affinities which shows its likeness to the ravings of delirium. Being such, it is beyond question the rudiment of a nightmare, a habit, an absurdity. Let it become once developed in its entirety, as its tendency leads it,[2] and you will find that it is essentially an active and complete image, a vision drawing along with it a train of dreams and sensations, which increases of itself, suddenly, by a sort of rank and absorbing growth, and which ends by possessing, shaking, exhausting the whole man. After this, another, perhaps entirely opposite, and so on successively: there is nothing else in man, no free and distinct power: he is in himself but the process of these headlong impulses and swarming imaginations: civilization has mutilated, attenuated, but not destroyed them; shocks, collisions,

[1] This idea may be expanded psychologically: external perception, memory, are real hallucinations, etc. This is the analytical aspect: under another aspect reason and health are the natural goals.

[2] See Spinoza and Dugald Stewart: Conception in its natural state is belief.

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transports, sometimes at long intervals a sort of transient partial equilibrium: this is his real life, the life of a lunatic, who now and then simulates reason, but who is in reality "such stuff as dreams are made on";[3] and this is man, as Shakespeare has conceived him. No writer, not even Molière, has penetrated so far beneath the semblance of common-sense and logic in which the human machine is enclosed, in order to disentangle the brute powers which constitute its substance and its mainspring.

How did Shakespeare succeed? and by what extraordinary instinct did he divine the remote conclusions, the deepest insights of physiology and psychology? He had a complete imagination; his whole genius lies in that complete imagination. These words seem commonplace and void of meaning. Let us examine them closer, to understand what they contain. When we think a thing, we, ordinary men, we only think a part of it; we see one side, some isolated mark, sometimes two or three marks together; for what is beyond, our sight fails us; the infinite network of its infinitely complicated and multiplied properties escapes us; we feel vaguely that there is something beyond our shallow ken, and this vague suspicion is the only part of our idea which at all reveals to us the great beyond. We are like tyro naturalists, quiet people of limited understanding, who, wishing to represent an animal, recall its name and ticket in the museum, with some indistinct image of its hide and figure; but their mind stops there. If it so happens that they wish to complete their knowledge, they lead their memory, by regular classifications, over the principal characters of the animal, and slowly, discursively, piecemeal, bring at last the bare anatomy before their eyes. To this their idea is reduced, even when perfected; to this also most frequently is our conception reduced, even when elaborated. What a distance there is between this conception and the object, how imperfectly and meanly the one represents the other, to what extent this mutilates that; how the consecutive idea, disjoined in little, regularly arranged and inert fragments, resembles but slightly the organized, living thing, created simultaneously, ever in action, and ever transformed, words cannot explain. Picture to yourself, instead of this poor dry idea, propped up by a miserable

[3] "Tempest," iv. 1.

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mechanical linkwork of thought, the complete idea, that is, an inner representation, so abundant and full that it exhausts all the properties and relations of the object, all its inward and outward aspects; that it exhausts them instantaneously; that it conceives of the entire animal, its color, the play of the light upon its skin, its form, the quivering of its outstretched limbs, the flash of its eyes, and at the same time its passion of the moment, its excitement, its dash; and beyond this its instincts, their composition, their causes, their history; so that the hundred thousand characteristics which make up its condition and its nature find their analogues in the imagination which concentrates and reflects them: there you have the artist's conception, the poet's—Shakespeare's; so superior to that of the logician, of the mere savant or man of the world, the only one capable of penetrating to the very essence of existences, of extricating the inner from beneath the outer man, of feeling through sympathy, and imitating without effort, the irregular oscillation of human imaginations and impressions, of reproducing life with its infinite fluctuations, its apparent contradictions, its concealed logic; in short, to create as nature creates. This is what is done by the other artists of this age; they have the same kind of mind, and the same idea of life: you will find in Shakespeare only the same faculties, with a still stronger impulse; the same idea, with a still more prominent relief.

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CHAPTER FOURTH

SHAKESPEARE

I AM about to describe an extraordinary species of mind, perplexing to all the French modes of analysis and reasoning, all-powerful, excessive, master of the sublime as well as of the base; the most creative mind that ever engaged in the exact copy of the details of actual existence, in the dazzling caprice of fancy, in the profound complications of superhuman passions; a nature poetical, immoral, inspired, superior to reason by the sudden revelations of its seer's madness; so extreme in joy and grief, so abrupt of gait, so agitated and impetuous in its transports, that this great age alone could have cradled such a child.

Section I.—Life and Character of Shakespeare

Of Shakespeare all came from within—I mean from his soul and his genius; circumstances and the externals contributed but slightly to his development.[1] He was intimately bound up with his age; that is, he knew by experience the manners of country, court, and town; he had visited the heights, depths, the middle ranks of mankind; nothing more. In all other respects his life was commonplace; its irregularities, troubles, passions, successes, were, on the whole, such as we meet with everywhere else.[2] His father, a glover and wool-stapler, in very easy circumstances, having married a sort of country heiress, had become high-bailiff and chief alderman in his little town; but when Shakespeare was nearly fourteen he was on the verge of ruin, mortgaging his wife's property, obliged to resign his municipal offices, and to remove his son from school to assist

[1] Halliwell's "Life of Shakespeare."

[2] Born 1564, died 1616. He adapted plays as early as 1591. The first play entirely from his pen appeared in 1593. —Payne Collier.

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him in his business. The young fellow applied himself to it as well as he could, not without some scrapes and frolics: if we are to believe tradition, he was one of the thirsty souls of the place, with a mind to support the reputation of his little town in its drinking powers. Once, they say, having been beaten at Bideford in one of these ale-bouts, he returned staggering from the fight, or rather could not return, and passed the night with his comrades under an apple-tree by the roadside. Without doubt he had already begun to write verses, to rove about like a genuine poet, taking part in the noisy rustic feasts, the gay allegorical pastorals, the rich and bold outbreak of pagan and poetical life, as it was then to be found in an English village. At all events, he was not a pattern of propriety, and his passions were as precocious as they were imprudent. While not yet nineteen years old, he married the daughter of a substantial yeoman, about eight years older than himself—and not too soon, as she was about to become a mother.[3] Other of his outbreaks were no more fortunate. It seems that he was fond of poaching, after the manner of the time, being "much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits," says the Rev. Richard Davies;[4] "particularly from Sir Thomas Lucy, who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly the country; . . . but his revenge was so great, that he is his Justice Clodpate." Moreover, about this time Shakespeare's father was in prison, his affairs were not prosperous, and he himself had three children, following one close upon the other; he must live, and life was hardly possible for him in his native town. He went to London, and took to the stage: took the lowest parts, was a "servant" in the theatre, that is, an apprentice, or perhaps a supernumerary. They even said that he had begun still lower, and that to earn his bread he had held gentlemen's horses at the door of the theatre.[5] At all events he tasted misery, and felt, not in imagination, but in fact, the sharp thorn of care, humiliation, disgust, forced labor, public discredit, the power of the people. He was a comedian, one of "His Majesty's poor players"[6]—a sad trade, degraded in all ages by the

[3] Mr. Halliwell and other commentators try to prove that at this time the preliminary trothplight was regarded as the real marriage; that this trothplight had taken place, and that there was therefore no irregularity in Shakespeare's conduct.

[4] Halliwell, 123.

[5] All these anecdotes are traditions, and consequently more or less doubtful; but the other facts are authentic.

[6] Terms of an extant document. He is named along with Burbage and Greene.

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contrasts and the falsehoods which it allows: still more degraded then by the brutalities of the crowd, who not seldom would stone the actors, and by the severities of the magistrates, who would sometimes condemn them to lose their ears. He felt it, and spoke of it with bitterness:

> "Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear." [7]

And again:

> "When in disgrace with fortune [8] and men's eyes,
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,
> And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
> And look upon myself and curse my fate,
> Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
> Featured like him, like him with friends possessed. . . .
> With what I most enjoy contented least;
> Yet in those thoughts myself almost despising." [9]

We shall find further on the traces of this long-enduring disgust, in his melancholy characters, as where he says:

> "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office and the spurns
> The patient merit of the unworthy takes,
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin?" [10]

But the worst of this undervalued position is, that it eats into the soul. In the company of actors we become actors: it is vain to wish to keep clean, if you live in a dirty place; it cannot be. No matter if a man braces himself; necessity drives him into a corner and sullies him. The machinery of the decorations, the tawdriness and medley of the costumes, the smell of the tallow and the candles, in contrast with the parade of refinement and loftiness, all the cheats and sordidness of the representation, the bitter alternative of hissing or applause, the keeping of the highest and lowest company, the habit of sporting

[7] Sonnet 110.
[8] See Sonnets 91 and 111; also "Hamlet," iii. 2. Many of Hamlet's words would come better from the mouth of an actor than a prince. See also the 66th Sonnet, "Tired with all these."
[9] Sonnet 29.
[10] "Hamlet," iii. 1.

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with human passions, easily unhinge the soul, drive it down the slope of excess, tempt it to loose manners, green-room adventures, the loves of strolling actresses. Shakespeare escaped them no more than Molière, and grieved for it, like Molière:

> "O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds." [11]

They used to relate in London how his comrade Burbadge, who played Richard III, having a rendezvous with the wife of a citizen, Shakespeare went before, was well received, and was pleasantly occupied, when Burbage arrived, to whom he sent the message that William the Conqueror came before Richard III.[12] We may take this as an example of the tricks and somewhat coarse intrigues which are planned, and follow in quick succession, on this stage. Outside the theatre he lived with fashionable young nobles, Pembroke, Montgomery, Southampton,[13] and others, whose hot and licentious youth gratified his imagination and senses by the example of Italian pleasures and elegancies. Add to this the rapture and transport of poetical nature, and this kind of afflux, this boiling over of all the powers and desires which takes place in brains of this kind, when the world for the first time opens before them, and you will understand the "Venus and Adonis," "the first heir of his invention." In fact, it is a first cry, a cry in which the whole man is displayed. Never was seen a heart so quivering to the touch of beauty, of beauty of every kind, so delighted with the freshness and splendor of things, so eager and so excited in adoration and enjoyment, so violently and entirely carried to the very essence of voluptuousness. His Venus is unique; no painting of Titian's has a more brilliant and delicious coloring;[14] no strumpet-goddess of Tintoretto or Giorgione is more soft and beautiful:

> "With blindfold fury she begins to forage,
> Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil. . . .

[11] Sonnet 111.
[12] Anecdote written in 1602 on the authority of Tooley the actor.
[13] The Earl of Southampton was nineteen years old when Shakespeare dedicated his "Adonis" to him.
[14] See Titian's picture, Loves of the Gods, at Blenheim.

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And glutton-like she feeds, yet never filleth;
Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,
Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;
Whose vulture thought doth pitch the price so high,
That she will draw his lips' rich treasure dry." [15]

"Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast,
Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone,
Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
Till either gorge be stuff'd or prey be gone;
Even so she kiss'd his brow, his cheek, his chin,
And where she ends she doth anew begin." [16]

All is taken by storm, the senses first, the eyes dazzled by carnal beauty, but the heart also from whence the poetry overflows: the fulness of youth inundates even inanimate things; the country looks charming amidst the rays of the rising sun, the air, saturated with brightness, makes a gala-day:

"Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun riseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold
That cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold." [17]

An admirable debauch of imagination and rapture, yet disquieting; for such a mood will carry one a long way.[18] No fair and frail dame in London was without "Adonis" on her table.[19] Perhaps Shakespeare perceived that he had transcended the bounds, for the tone of his next poem, the "Rape of Lucrece," is quite different; but as he had already a mind liberal enough to embrace at the same time, as he did afterwards in his dramas, the two extremes of things, he continued none the less to follow his bent. The "sweet abandonment of love" was the great occupation of his life; he was tender-hearted, and he was a poet: nothing more is required to be smitten, deceived, to suffer, to traverse without pause the circle of illusions and troubles, which whirls and whirls round, and never ends.

He had many loves of this kind, amongst others one for a sort of Marion Delorme,[20] a miserable deluding despotic passion, of

[15] "Venus and Adonis," lines 548-553.
[16] Ibid. lines 55-60.
[17] Ibid. lines 853-858.
[18] Compare the first pieces of Alfred de Musset, "Contes d'Italie et d'Espagne."
[19] Crawley, quoted by Ph. Chasles, "Études sur Shakspeare."
[20] A famed French courtesan (1613-1650), the heroine of a drama of that name, by Victor Hugo, having for its subject-matter: "Love purifies everything."—Tr.

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which he felt the burden and the shame, but from which nevertheless he could not and would not free himself. Nothing can be sadder than his confessions, or mark better the madness of love, and the sentiment of human weakness:

> "When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her, though I know she lies." [21]

So spoke Alceste of Célimène;[22] but what a soiled Célimène is the creature before whom Shakespeare kneels, with as much of scorn as of desire!

> "Those lips of thine,
> That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
> And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine,
> Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.
> Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
> Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee." [23]

This is plain-speaking and deep shamelessness of soul, such as we find only in the stews; and these are the intoxications, the excesses, the delirium into which the most refined artists fall, when they resign their own noble hand to these soft, voluptuous, and clinging ones. They are higher than princes, and they descend to the lowest depths of sensual passion. Good and evil then lose their names; all things are inverted:

> "How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
> Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
> Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
> O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
> That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
> Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
> Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;
> Naming thy name blesses an ill report." [24]

What are proofs, the will, reason, honor itself, when the passion is so absorbing? What can be said further to a man who answers, "I know all that you are going to say, and what does it all amount to?" Great loves are inundations, which drown all repugnance and all delicacy of soul, all preconceived opinions and all received principles. Thenceforth the heart is dead

[21] Sonnet 138.
[22] Two characters in Molière's "Misanthrope." The scene referred to is Act v. Scene 7.—Tr.
[23] Sonnet 142.
[24] Sonnet 95.

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to all ordinary pleasures: it can only feel and breathe on one side. Shakespeare envies the keys of the instrument over which his mistress's fingers run. If he looks at flowers, it is she whom he pictures beyond them; and the extravagant splendors of dazzling poetry spring up in him repeatedly, as soon as he thinks of those glowing black eyes:

> "From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim,
> Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
> That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him." [25]

He saw none of it:

> "Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
> Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose." [26]

All this sweetness of spring was but her perfume and her shade:

> "The forward violet thus I did chide:
> 'Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
> If not from my love's breath? The purple pride,
> Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells
> In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.'
> The lily I condemned for thy hand,
> And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair:
> The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
> One blushing shame, another white despair:
> A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both
> And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath; . . .
> More flowers I noted, yet I none could see
> But sweet or color it had stol'n from thee." [27]

Passionate archness, delicious affectations, worthy of Heine and the contemporaries of Dante, which tell us of long rapturous dreams concentrated on one subject. Under a sway so imperious and sustained, what sentiment could maintain its ground? That of family? He was married and had children—a family which he went to see "once a year"; and it was probably on his return from one of these journeys that he used the words above quoted. Conscience? "Love is too young to know what conscience is." Jealousy and anger?

> "For, thou betraying me, I do betray
> My nobler part to my gross body's treason." [28]

[25] Sonnet 98. [26] Ibid. [27] Sonnet 99. [28] Sonnet 151.

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Repulses?

> "He is contented thy poor drudge to be
> To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side." [29]

He is no longer young; she loves another, a handsome, young, light-haired fellow, his own dearest friend, whom he has presented to her, and whom she wishes to seduce:

> "Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
> Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
> The better angel is a man right fair,
> The worser spirit a woman color'd ill.
> To win me soon to hell, my female evil
> Tempteth my better angel from my side." [30]

And when she has succeeded in this,[31] he dares not confess it to himself, but suffers all, like Molière. What wretchedness is there in these trifles of every-day life! How man's thoughts instinctively place by Shakespeare's side the great unhappy French poet (Molière), also a philosopher by nature, but more of a professional laugher, a mocker of old men in love, a bitter railer at deceived husbands, who, after having played in one of his most approved comedies, said aloud to a friend, "My dear fellow, I am in despair; my wife does not love me!" Neither glory, nor work, nor invention satisfies these vehement souls: love alone can gratify them, because, with their senses and heart, it contents also their brain; and all the powers of man, imagination like the rest, find in it their concentration and their employment. "Love is my sin," he said, as did Musset and Heine; and in the Sonnets we find traces of yet other passions, equally abandoned; one in particular, seemingly for a great lady. The first half of his dramas, "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," preserve the warm imprint more completely; and we have only to consider his latest women's character,[32] to see with what exquisite tenderness, what full adoration, he loved them to the end.

[29] Sonnet 151.

[30] Sonnet 144; also the "Passionate Pilgrim," 2.

[31] This new interpretation of the Sonnets is due to the ingenious and learned conjectures of M. Ph. Chasles.—For a short history of these Sonnets, see Dyce's "Shakspeare," i. pp. 96-102. This learned editor says: "I contend that allusions scattered through the whole series are not to be hastily referred to the personal circumstances of Shakspeare."—Tr.

[32] Miranda, Desdemona, Viola. The following are the first words of the Duke in "Twelfth Night":

> "If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again! it had a dying fall:
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,

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In this is all his genius; his was one of those delicate souls which, like a perfect instrument of music, vibrate of themselves at the slightest touch. This fine sensibility was the first thing observed in him. "My darling Shakespeare," "Sweet Swan of Avon": these words of Ben Jonson only confirm what his contemporaries reiterate. He was affectionate and kind, "civil in demeanor, and excellent in the qualitie he professes";[32] if he had the impulse, he had also the effusion of true artists; he was loved, men were delighted in his company; nothing is more sweet or winning than this charm, this half-feminine abandonment in a man. His wit in conversation was ready, ingenious, nimble; his gayety brilliant; his imagination fluent, and so copious, that, as his friends tell us, he never erased what he had written; at least when he wrote out a scene for the second time, it was the idea which he would change, not the words, by an after-glow of poetic thought, not with a painful tinkering of the verse. All these characteristics are combined into a single one: he had a sympathetic genius; I mean that naturally he knew how to forget himself and become transfused into all the objects which he conceived. Look around you at the great artists of your time, try to approach them, to become acquainted with them, to see them as they think, and you will observe the full force of this word. By an extraordinary instinct, they put themselves at once in a position of existences; men, animals, flowers, plants, landscapes, whatever the objects are, living or not, they feel by intuition the forces and tendencies which produce the visible external; and their soul, infinitely complex, becomes by its ceaseless metamorphoses a sort of abstract of the universe. This is why they seem to live more than other men; they have no need to be taught, they divine. I have seen such a man, *á propos* of a piece of armor, a costume, a collection of furniture, enter into the Middle Ages more fully than three savants together. They reconstruct, as they build, naturally, surely, by an inspiration which is a winged chain of reasoning. Shakespeare had only an imperfect education, "small Latin and

That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soever,
But falls into abatement and low price.
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high-fantastical."

[32] H. Chettle, in repudiating Greene's sarcasm, attributed it to him.

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less Greek," barely French and Italian,[84] nothing else; he had not travelled, he had only read the current literature of his day, he had picked up a few law words in the court of his little town: reckon up, if you can, all that he knew of man and of history. These men see more objects at a time; they grasp them more closely than other men, more quickly and thoroughly; their mind is full, and runs over. They do not rest in simple reasoning; at every idea their whole being, reflections, images, emotions, are set a-quiver. See them at it; they gesticulate, mimic their thought, brim over with comparisons; even in their talk they are imaginative and original, with familiarity and boldness of speech, sometimes happily, always irregularly, according to the whims and starts of the adventurous improvisation. The animation, the brilliancy of their language is marvellous; so are their fits, the wide leaps which they couple widely removed ideas, annihilating distance, passing from pathos to humor, from vehemence to gentleness. This extraordinary rapture is the last thing to quit them. If perchance ideas fail, or if their melancholy is too violent, they still speak and produce, even if it be nonsense: they become clowns, though at their own expense, and to their own hurt. I know one of these men who will talk nonsense when he thinks he is dying, or has a mind to kill himself; the inner wheel continues to turn, even upon nothing, that wheel which man must needs see ever turning, even though it tear him as it turns; his buffoonery is an outlet: you will find him, this inextinguishable urchin, this ironical puppet, at Ophelia's tomb, at Cleopatra's death-bed, at Juliet's funeral. High or low, these men must always be at some extreme. They feel their good and their ill too deeply; they expatiate too abundantly on each condition of their soul, by a sort of involuntary novel. After their traducings and the disgusts by which they debase themselves beyond measure they rise and become exalted in a marvellous fashion, even trembling with pride and joy. "Haply," says Shakespeare, after one of these dull moods:

> "Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
> Like to the lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate." [85]

[84] Dyce, "Shakespeare," i. 27: "Of French and Italian, I apprehend, he knew but little."—Tr.
[85] Sonnet 29.

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Then all fades away, as in a furnace where a stronger flare than usual has left no substance fuel behind it.

> "That time of year thou mayst in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
> In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
> As after sunset fadeth in the west,
> Which by and by black night doth take away,
> Death's second self, that seals up all in rest. . . ." [36]

> "No longer mourn for me when I am dead
> Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
> Give warning to the world that I am fled
> From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
> Nay, if you read this line, remember not
> The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
> That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot
> If thinking on me then should make you woe." [37]

These sudden alternatives of joy and sadness, divine transports and grand melancholies, exquisite tenderness and womanly depressions, depict the poet, extreme in emotions, ceaselessly troubled with grief or merriment, feeling the slightest shock, more strong, more dainty in enjoyment and suffering than other men, capable of more intense and sweeter dreams, within whom is stirred an imaginary world of graceful or terrible beings, all impassioned like their author.

Such as I have described him, however, he found his resting-place. Early, at least what regards outward appearances, he settled down to an orderly, sensible, almost humdrum existence, engaged in business, provident of the future. He remained on the stage for at least seventeen years, though taking secondary parts; [38] he sets his wits at the same time to the touching up of plays with so much activity, that Greene called him "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers; . . . an absolute Johannes factotum, in his owne conceyte the onely shake-scene in a countrey." [39] At the age of thirty-three he had amassed money enough to buy at Stratford a house with two barns and two gardens, and he went on steadier and steadier in the same course. A man attains only to easy circumstances by his own labor; if

[36] Sonnet 73. [37] Sonnet 71. [38] The part in which he excelled was that of the ghost in "Hamlet." [39] Greene's "A Groatsworth of Wit," etc.

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he gains wealth, it is by making others labor for him. This is why, to the trades of actor and author, Shakespeare added those of manager and director of a theatre. He acquired a share in the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, farmed tithes, bought large pieces of land, more houses, gave a dowry to his daughter Susanna, and finally retired to his native town on his property, in his own house, like a good landlord, an honest citizen, who manages his fortune fitly, and takes his share of municipal work. He had an income of two or three hundred pounds, which would be equivalent to about eight or twelve hundred at the present time, and according to tradition, lived cheerfully and on good terms with his neighbors; at all events, it does not seem that he thought much about his literary glory, for he did not even take the trouble to collect and publish his works. One of his daughters married a physician, the other a wine merchant; the last did not even know how to sign her name. He lent money, and cut a good figure in this little world. Strange close; one which at first sight resembles more that of a shopkeeper than of a poet. Must we attribute it to that English instinct which places happiness in the life of a country gentleman and a landlord with a good rent-roll, well connected, surrounded by comforts, who quietly enjoys his undoubted respectability,[40] his domestic authority, and his county standing? Or rather, was Shakespeare, like Voltaire, a common-sense man, though of an imaginative brain, keeping a sound judgment under the sparkling of his genius, prudent from scepticism, saving through a desire for independence, and capable, after going the round of human ideas, of deciding with Candide,[41] that the best thing one can do in this world is "to cultivate one's garden"? I had rather think, as his full and solid head suggests,[42] that by the mere force of his overflowing imagination he escaped, like Goethe, the perils of an overflowing imagination; that in depicting passion, he succeeded, like Goethe, in deadening passion; that the fire did not break out in his conduct, because it found issue in his poetry; that his theatre kept pure his life; and that, having passed, by sympathy, through every kind of folly and wretchedness that is incident to human existence, he was able to

[40] "He was a respectable man." "A good word; what does it mean?" "He kept a gig."—From Thurtell's trial for the murder of Weare.

[41] The model of an optimist, the hero of one of Voltaire's tales.—Tr.

[42] See his portraits, and in particular his bust.

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settle down amidst them with a calm and melancholic smile, listening, for the sake of relaxation, to the aërial music of the fancies in which he revelled.[48] I am willing to believe, lastly, that in frame as in other things, he belonged to his great generation and his great age; that with him, as with Rabelais, Titian, Michel Angelo, and Rubens, the solidity of the muscles was a counterpoise to the sensibility of the nerves; that in those days the human machine, more severely tried and more firmly constructed, could withstand the storms of passion and the fire of inspiration; that soul and body were still at equilibrium; that genius was then a blossom, and not, as now, a disease. We can but make conjectures about all this: if we would become acquainted more closely with the man, we must seek him in his works.

Section II.—Shakespeare's Style.—Copiousness.—Excesses

Let us then look for the man, and in his style. The style explains the work; whilst showing the principal features of the genius, it infers the rest. When we have once grasped the dominant faculty, we see the whole artist developed like a flower.

Shakespeare imagines with copiousness and excess; he scatters metaphors profusely over all he writes; every instant abstract ideas are changed into images; it is a series of paintings which is unfolded in his mind. He does not seek them, they come of themselves; they crowd within him, covering his arguments; they dim with their brightness the pure light of logic. He does not labor to explain or prove; picture on picture, image on image, he is forever copying the strange and splendid visions which are engendered one after another, and are heaped up within him. Compare to our dull writers this passage, which I take at hazard from a tranquil dialogue:

> "The single and peculiar life is bound,
> With all the strength and armor of the mind,
> To keep itself from noyance; but much more
> That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
> The lives of many. The cease of majesty
> Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
> What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,

[48] Especially in his later plays: "Tempest," "Twelfth Night."

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To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan." [1]

Here we have three successive images to express the same thought. It is a whole blossoming; a bough grows from the trunk, from that another, which is multiplied into numerous fresh branches. Instead of a smooth road, traced by a regular line of dry and cunningly fixed landmarks, you enter a wood, crowded with interwoven trees and luxuriant bushes, which conceal and prevent your progress, which delight and dazzle your eyes by the magnificence of their verdure and the wealth of their bloom. You are astonished at first, modern mind that you are, business man, used to the clear dissertations of classical poetry; you become cross; you think the author is amusing himself, and that through conceit and bad taste he is misleading you and himself in his garden thickets. By no means; if he speaks thus, it is not from choice, but of necessity; metaphor is not his whim, but the form of his thought. In the height of passion, he imagines still. When Hamlet, in despair, remembers his father's noble form, he sees the mythological pictures with which the taste of the age filled the very streets:

"A station like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill." [2]

This charming vision, in the midst of a bloody invective, proves that there lurks a painter underneath the poet. Involuntarily and out of season, he tears off the tragic mask which covered his face; and the reader discovers, behind the contracted features of this terrible mask, a graceful and inspired smile which he did not expect to see.

Such an imagination must needs be vehement. Every metaphor is a convulsion. Whosoever involuntarily and naturally transforms a dry idea into an image, has his brain on fire; true metaphors are flaming apparitions, which are like a picture in a flash of lightning. Never, I think, in any nation of Europe, or in any age of history, has so grand a passion been seen. Shakespeare's style is a compound of frenzied expressions. No man

[1] "Hamlet," iii. 3. [2] Act iii. Scene 4.

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has submitted words to such a contortion. Mingled contrasts, tremendous exaggerations, apostrophes, exclamations; the whole fury of the ode, confusion of ideas, accumulation of images, the horrible and the divine, jumbled into the same line; it seems to my fancy as though he never writes a word without shouting it. "What have I done?" the queen asks Hamlet. He answers:

> "Such an act
> That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
> Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
> From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
> And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
> As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
> As from the body of contraction plucks
> The very soul, and sweet religion makes
> A rhapsody of words: Heaven's face doth glow;
> Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
> With tristful visage, as against the doom,
> Is thought-sick at the act." [3]

It is the style of frenzy. Yet I have not given all. The metaphors are all exaggerated, the ideas all verge on the absurd. All is transformed and disfigured by the whirlwind of passion. The contagion of the crime, which he denounces, has marred all nature. He no longer sees anything in the world but corruption and lying. To vilify the virtuous were little; he vilifies virtue herself. Inanimate things are sucked into this whirlpool of grief. The sky's red tint at sunset, the pallid darkness spread by night over the landscape, become the blush and the pallor of shame, and the wretched man who speaks and weeps sees the whole world totter with him in the dimness of despair.

Hamlet, it will be said, is half-mad; this explains the vehemence of his expressions. The truth is that Hamlet, here, is Shakespeare. Be the situation terrible or peaceful, whether he is engaged on an invective or a conversation, the style is excessive throughout. Shakespeare never sees things tranquilly. All the powers of his mind are concentrated in the present image or idea. He is buried and absorbed in it. With such a genius, we are on the brink of an abyss; the eddying water dashes in headlong, swallowing up whatever objects it meets, and only bringing them to light transformed and mutilated. We pause

[3] Act iii. Scene 4.

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stupefied before these convulsive metaphors, which might have been written by a fevered hand in a night's delirium, which gather a pageful of ideas and pictures in half a sentence, which scorch the eyes they would enlighten. Words lose their meaning; constructions are put out of joint; paradoxes of style, apparently false expressions, which a man might occasionally venture upon with diffidence in the transport of his rapture, become the ordinary language. Shakespeare dazzles, repels, terrifies, disgusts, oppresses; his verses are a piercing and sublime song, pitched in too high a key, above the reach of our organs, which offends our ears, of which our mind alone can divine the justice and beauty.

Yet this is little; for that singular force of concentration is redoubled by the suddenness of the dash which calls it into existence. In Shakespeare there is no preparation, no adaptation, no development, no care to make himself understood. Like a too fiery and powerful horse, he bounds, but cannot run. He bridges in a couple of words an enormous interval; is at the two poles in a single instant. The reader vainly looks for the intermediate track; dazed by these prodigious leaps, he wonders by what miracle the poet has entered upon a new idea the very moment when he quitted the last, seeing perhaps between the two images a long scale of transitions, which we mount with difficulty step by step, but which he has spanned in a stride. Shakespeare flies, we creep. Hence comes a style made up of conceits, bold images, shattered in an instant by others still bolder, barely indicated ideas completed by others far removed, no visible connection, but a visible incoherence; at every step we halt, the track failing; and there, far above us, lo, stands the poet, and we find that we have ventured in his footsteps, through a craggy land, full of precipices, which he threads as if it were a straightforward road, but on which our greatest efforts barely carry us along.

What will you think, further, if we observe that these vehement expressions, so natural in their up-welling, instead of following one after the other, slowly and with effort, are hurled out by hundreds, with an impetuous ease and abundance, like the bubbling waves from a welling spring, which are heaped together, rise one above another, and find nowhere room enough to spread and exhaust themselves? You may find in " Romeo

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and Juliet" a score of examples of this inexhaustible inspiration. The two lovers pile up an infinite mass of metaphors, impassioned exaggerations, clenches, contorted phrases, amorous extravagances. Their language is like the trill of nightingales. Shakespeare's wits, Mercutio, Beatrice, Rosalind, his clowns, buffoons, sparkle with far-fetched jokes, which rattle out like a volley of musketry. There is none of them but provides enough play on words to stock a whole theatre. Lear's curses, or Queen Margaret's, would suffice for all the madmen in an asylum, or all the oppressed of the earth. The sonnets are a delirium of ideas and images, labored at with an obstinacy enough to make a man giddy. His first poem, "Venus and Adonis," is the sensual ecstasy of a Correggio, insatiable and excited. This exuberant fecundity intensifies qualities already in excess, and multiplies a hundred-fold the luxuriance of metaphor, the incoherence of style, and the unbridled vehemence of expression.[4]

All that I have said may be compressed into a few words. Objects were taken into his mind organized and complete; they pass into ours disjointed, decomposed, fragmentarily. He thought in the lump, we think piecemeal; hence his style and our style—two languages not to be reconciled. We, for our part, writers and reasoners, can note precisely by a word each isolated fraction of an idea, and represent the due order of its parts by the due order of our expressions. We advance gradually; we follow the filiations, refer continually to the roots, try and treat our words as numbers, our sentences as equations; we employ but general terms, which every mind can understand, and regular constructions, into which any mind can enter; we attain justness and clearness, not life. Shakespeare lets justness and clearness look out for themselves, and attains life. From amidst his complex conception and his colored semi-vision, he grasps a fragment, a quivering fibre, and shows it; it is for you, from this fragment, to divine the rest. He, behind the word, has a whole picture, an attitude, a long argument abridged, a mass of swarming ideas; you know them, these abbreviative, condensive words: these are they which we launch out amidst the fire of invention, in a fit of passion—words of slang or of fashion, which

[4] This is why, in the eyes of a writer of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare's style is the most obscure, pretentious, painful, barbarous, and absurd, that could be imagined.

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appeal to local memory or individual experience;[5] little desultory and incorrect phrases, which, by their irregularity, express the suddenness and the breaks of the inner sensation; trivial words, exaggerated figures.[6] There is a gesture beneath each, a quick contraction of the brows, a curl of laughing lips, a clown's trick, an unhinging of the whole machine. None of them mark ideas, all suggest images; each is the extremity and issue of a complete mimic action; none is the expression and definition of a partial and limited idea. This is why Shakespeare is strange and powerful, obscure and creative, beyond all the poets of his or any other age; the most immoderate of all violators of language, the most marvellous of all creators of souls, the farthest removed from regular logic and classical reason, the one most capable of exciting in us a world of forms and of placing living beings before us.

Section III.—Shakespeare's Language and Manners

Let us reconstruct this world, so as to find in it the imprint of its creator. A poet does not copy at random the manners which surround him; he selects from this vast material, and involuntarily brings upon the stage the habits of the heart and conduct which best suit his talent. If he is a logician, a moralist, an orator, as, for instance, one of the French great tragic poets (Racine) of the seventeenth century, he will only represent noble manners; he will avoid low characters; he will have a horror of menials and the plebs; he will observe the greatest decorum amidst the strongest outbreaks of passion; he will reject as scandalous every low or indecent word; he will give us reason, loftiness, good taste throughout; he will suppress the familiarity, childishness, artlessness, gay banter of domestic life; he will blot out precise details, special traits, and will carry tragedy into a serene and sublime region, where his abstract personages, unencumbered by time and space, after an exchange of eloquent harangues and able dissertations, will kill each other becomingly, and as though they were merely concluding a ceremony.

[5] Shakespeare's vocabulary is the most copious of all. It comprises about 15,000 words; Milton's only 8,000.

[6] See the conversation of Laertes and his sister, and of Laertes and Polonius, in "Hamlet." The style is foreign to the situation; and we see here plainly the natural and necessary process of Shakespeare's thought.

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Shakespeare does just the contrary, because his genius is the exact opposite. His master faculty is an impassioned imagination, freed from the shackles of reason and morality. He abandons himself to it, and finds in man nothing that he would care to lop off. He accepts nature and finds it beautiful in its entirety. He paints it in its littlenesses, it deformities, its weaknesses, its excesses, its irregularities, and its rages; he exhibits man at his meals, in bed, at play, drunk, mad, sick; he adds that which ought not to be seen to that which passes on the stage. He does not dream of ennobling, but of copying human life, and aspires only to make his copy more energetic and more striking than the original.

Hence the morals of this drama; and first, the want of dignity. Dignity arises from self-command. A man selects the most noble of his acts and attitudes, and allows himself no other. Shakespeare's characters select none, but allow themselves all. His kings are men, and fathers of families. The terrible Leontes, who is about to order the death of his wife and his friend, plays like a child with his son: caresses him, gives him all the pretty pet names which mothers are wont to employ; he dares be trivial; he gabbles like a nurse; he has her language and fulfils her duties:

"*Leontes.* What, hast smutch'd thy nose?
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain: . . .
Come, sir page,
Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!
Most dear'st! my collop . . . Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master. . . .
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman! . . . My brother,
Are you so fond of your young prince as we
Do seem to be of ours?
Polixenes. If at home, sir,
He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter,
Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy,
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:
He makes a July's day short as December,
And with his varying childness cures in me
Thoughts that would thick my blood." [1]

[1] "Winter's Tale," i. 2.

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There are a score of such passages in Shakespeare. The great passions, with him as in nature, are preceded or followed by trivial actions, small-talk, commonplace sentiments. Strong emotions are accidents in our life: to drink, to eat, to talk of indifferent things, to carry out mechanically a habitual duty, to dream of some stale pleasure or some ordinary annoyance, that is in which we employ all our time. Shakespeare paints us as we are; his heroes bow, ask people for news, speak of rain and fine weather, as often and as casually as ourselves, on the very eve of falling into the extremity of misery, or of plunging into fatal resolutions. Hamlet asks what's o'clock, finds the wind biting, talks of feasts and music heard without; and this quiet talk, so unconnected with the action, so full of slight, insignificant facts, which chance alone has raised up and guided, lasts until the moment when his father's ghost, rising in the darkness, reveals the assassination which it is his duty to avenge.

Reason tells us that our manners should be measured; this is why the manners which Shakespeare paints are not so. Pure nature is violent, passionate: it admits no excuses, suffers no middle course, takes no count of circumstances, wills blindly, breaks out into railing, has the irrationality, ardor, anger of children. Shakespeare's characters have hot blood and a ready hand. They cannot restrain themselves, they abandon themselves at once to their grief, indignation, love, and plunge desperately down the steep slope, where their passion urges them. How many need I quote? Timon, Posthumus, Cressida, all the young girls, all the chief characters in the great dramas; everywhere Shakespeare paints the unreflecting impetuosity of the impulse of the moment. Capulet tells his daughter Juliet that in three days she is to marry Earl Paris, and bids her be proud of it; she answers that she is not proud of it, and yet she thanks the earl for this proof of love. Compare Capulet's fury with the anger of Orgon,[2] and you may measure the difference of the two poets and the two civilizations:

> "*Capulet.* How now, how now, chop-logic! What is this?
> 'Proud,' and 'I thank you,' and 'I thank you not;'
> And yet 'not proud,' mistress minion, you,
> Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
> But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,

[2] One of Molière's characters in "Tartuffe."—Tr.

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To go with Paris to Saint Peter's church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
Out, you green-sickness carrion! out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!
Juliet. Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
Hear me with patience but to speak a word.
C. Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch
I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face:
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me;
My fingers itch. . . .
Lady C. You are too hot.
C. God's bread! it makes me mad:
Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,
Alone, in company, still my care hath been
To have her match'd: and having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly train'd,
Stuff'd, as they say, with honorable parts,
Proportion'd as one's thoughts would wish a man;
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
To answer, '*I'll not wed; I cannot love,*
I am too young; I pray you, pardon me,'—
But, an you will not wed, I'll pardon you:
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me:
Look to't, think on't, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise:
An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee." [3]

This method of exhorting one's child to marry is peculiar to Shakespeare and the sixteenth century. Contradiction to these men was like a red rag to a bull; it drove them mad.

We might be sure that in this age, and on this stage, decency was a thing unknown. It is wearisome, being a check; men got rid of it, because it was wearisome. It is a gift of reason and morality; as indecency is produced by nature and passion. Shakespeare's words are too indecent to be translated. His characters call things by their dirty names, and compel the thoughts to particular images of physical love. The talk of gentlemen and ladies is full of coarse allusions; we should have to find out an alehouse of the lowest description to hear like words nowadays.[4]

[3] "Romeo and Juliet," iii. 5.

[4] "Henry VIII," ii. 3, and many other scenes.

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It would be in an alehouse too that we should have to look for the rude jests and brutal kind of wit which form the staple of these conversations. Kindly politeness is the slow fruit of advanced reflection; it is a sort of humanity and kindliness applied to small acts and everyday discourse; it bids man soften towards others, and forget himself for the sake of others; it constrains genuine nature, which is selfish and gross. This is why it is absent from the manners of the drama we are considering. You will see carmen, out of sportiveness and good humor, deal one another hard blows; so it is pretty well with the conversation of the lords and ladies of Shakespeare who are in a sportive mood; for instance, Beatrice and Benedick, very well bred folk as things go,[5] with a great reputation for wit and politeness, whose smart retorts create amusement for the bystanders. These "skirmishes of wit" consist in telling one another plainly: You are a coward, a glutton, an idiot, a buffoon, a rake, a brute! You are a parrot's tongue, a fool, a . . . (the word is there). Benedick says:

"I will go . . . to the Antipodes . . . rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. . . . I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. . . .

Don Pedro. You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

Beatrice. So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools." [6]

We can infer the tone they use when in anger. Emilia, in "Othello," says:

> "He call'd her whore; a beggar in his drink
> Could not have laid such terms upon his callat." [7]

They have a vocabulary of foul words as complete as that of Rabelais, and they exhaust it. They catch up handfuls of mud and hurl it at their enemy, not conceiving themselves to be smirched.

Their actions correspond. They go without shame or pity to the limits of their passion. They kill, poison, violate, burn; the stage is full of abominations. Shakespeare lugs upon the stage all the atrocious deeds of the Civil Wars. These are the ways of wolves and hyenas. We must read of Jack Cade's sedition [8] to

[5] "Much Ado about Nothing." See also the manner in which Henry V in Shakespeare's "King Henry V" pays court to Katharine of France (v. 2).

[6] Ibid. ii. 1.

[7] Act iv. 2.

[8] Second part of "Henry VI," iv. 6.

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gain an idea of this madness and fury. We might imagine we were seeing infuriated beasts, the murderous recklessness of a wolf in a sheepfold, the brutality of a hog fouling and rolling himself in filth and blood. They destroy, kill, butcher each other; with their feet in the blood of their victims, they call for food and drink; they stick heads on pikes and make them kiss one another, and they laugh.

"*Jack Cade.* There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny. . . . There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score, and I will apparel them all in one livery. . . . And here sitting upon London-stone, I charge and command that, of the city's cost, the pissing-conduit run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign. . . . Away, burn all the records of the realm; my mouth shall be the parliament of England. . . . And henceforth all things shall be in common. . . . What canst thou answer to my majesty for giving up of Normandy unto Mounsieur Basimecu, the dauphin of France? . . . The proudest peer in the realm shall not wear a head on his shoulders, unless he pay me tribute; there shall not a maid be married, but she shall pay to me her maidenhead ere they have it. (*Re-enter rebels with the heads of Lord Say and his son-in-law.*) But is not this braver? Let them kiss one another, for they loved well when they were alive." [9]

Man must not be let loose; we know not what lusts and rage may brood under a sober guise. Nature was never so hideous, and this hideousness is the truth.

Are these cannibal manners only met with among the scum? Why, the princes are worse. The Duke of Cornwall orders the old Earl of Gloucester to be tied to a chair, because, owing to him, King Lear has escaped:

"Fellows, hold the chair.
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.
(*Gloucester is held down in the chair, while Cornwall plucks out one of his eyes, and sets his foot on it.*)
Glou. He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help! O cruel: O you gods!
Regan. One side will mock another; the other too.
Cornwall. If you see vengeance—
Servant. Hold your hand, my lord:
I have served you ever since I was a child;
But better service have I never done you,
Than now to bid you hold.
Regan. How now, you dog!

[9] "Henry VI," 2d part, iv. 2, 6, 7.

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Serv. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?
Corn. My villain! (*Draws and runs at him.*)
Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.
(*Draws; they fight; Cornwall is wounded.*)
Regan. Give me thy sword. A peasant stands up thus.
(*Snatches a sword, comes behind, and stabs him.*)
Serv. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. O! (*Dies.*)
Corn. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?
Glou. All dark and comfortless. Where's my son? . . .
Regan. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover." [10]

Such are the manners of that stage. They are unbridled, like those of the age, and like the poet's imagination. To copy the common actions of every-day life, the puerilities and feeblenesses to which the greatest continually sink, the outbursts of passion which degrade them, the indecent, harsh, or foul words, the atrocious deeds in which license revels, the brutality and ferocity of primitive nature, is the work of a free and unencumbered imagination. To copy this hideousness and these excesses with a selection of such familiar, significant, precise details, that they reveal under every word of every personage a complete civilization, is the work of a concentrated and all-powerful imagination. This species of manners and this energy of description indicate the same faculty, unique and excessive, which the style had already indicated.

Section IV.—Dramatis Personæ

On this common background stands out in striking relief a population of distinct living figures, illuminated by an intense light. This creative power is Shakespeare's great gift, and it communicates an extraordinary significance to his words. Every phrase pronounced by one of its characters enables us to see, besides the idea which it contains and the emotion which prompted it, the aggregate of the qualities and the entire character which produced it—the mood, physical attitude, bearing, look of the man, all instantaneously, with a clearness and force aproached by no one. The words which strike our ears are not

[10] "King Lear," iii. 7.

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the thousandth part of those we hear within; they are like sparks thrown off here and there; the eyes catch rare flashes of flame; the mind alone perceives the vast conflagration of which they are the signs and the effect. He gives us two dramas in one: the first strange, convulsive, curtailed, visible; the other consistent, immense, invisible; the one covers the other so well, that as a rule we do not realize that we are perusing words: we hear the roll of those terrible voices, we see contracted features, glowing eyes, pallid faces; we see the agitation, the furious resolutions which mount to the brain with the feverish blood, and descend to the sharp-strung nerves. This property possessed by every phrase to exhibit a world of sentiments and forms, comes from the fact that the phrase is actually caused by a world of emotions and images. Shakespeare, when he wrote, felt all that we feel, and much besides. He had the prodigious faculty of seeing in a twinkling of the eye a complete character, body, mind, past and present, in every detail and every depth of his being, with the exact attitude and the expression of face, which the situation demanded. A word here and there of Hamlet or Othello would need for its explanation three pages of commentaries; each of the half-understood thoughts, which the commentator may have discovered, has left its trace in the turn of the phrase, in the nature of the metaphor, in the order of the words; nowadays, in pursuing these traces, we divine the thoughts. These innumerable traces have been impressed in a second, within the compass of a line. In the next line there are as many, impressed just as quickly, and in the same compass. You can gauge the concentration and the velocity of the imagination which creates thus.

These characters are all of the same family. Good or bad, gross or delicate, witty or stupid, Shakespeare gives them all the same kind of spirit which is his own. He has made of them imaginative people, void of will and reason, impassioned machines, vehemently jostled one against another, who were outwardly whatever is most natural and most abandoned in human nature. Let us act the play to ourselves, and see in all its stages this clanship of figures, this prominence of portraits.

Lowest of all are the stupid folk, babbling or brutish. Imagination already exists there, where reason is not yet born; it exists also there where reason is dead. The idiot and the brute blindly follow the phantoms which exist in their benumbed or

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mechanical brains. No poet has understood this mechanism like Shakespeare. His Caliban, for instance, a deformed savage, fed on roots, growls like a beast under the hand of Prospero, who has subdued him. He howls continually against his master, though he knows that every curse will be paid back with "cramps and aches." He is a chained wolf, trembling and fierce, who tries to bite when approached, and who crouches when he sees the lash raised. He has a foul sensuality, a loud base laugh, the gluttony of degraded humanity. He wishes to violate Miranda in her sleep. He cries for his food, and gorges himself when he gets it. A sailor who had landed in the island, Stephano, gives him wine; he kisses his feet, and takes him for a god; he asks if he has not dropped from heaven, and adores him. We find in him rebellious and baffled passions, which are eager to rise again and to be satiated. Stephano had beaten his comrade. Caliban cries, "Beat him enough: after a little time I'll beat him too." He prays Stephano to come with him and murder Prospero in his sleep; he thirsts to lead him there, dances through joy and sees his master already with his "weasand" cut, and his brains scattered on the earth:

> "Prithee, my king, be quiet. See'st thou here,
> This is the mouth o' the cell: no noise, and enter.
> Do that good mischief which may make this island
> Thine own forever, and I, thy Caliban,
> For aye thy foot-licker." [1]

Others, like Ajax and Cloten, are more like men, and yet it is pure mood that Shakespeare depicts in them, as in Caliban. The clogging corporeal machine, the mass of muscles, the thick blood sluggishly moving along in the veins of these fighting men, oppress the intelligence, and leave no life but for animal passions. Ajax uses his fists, and devours meat; that is his existence; if he is jealous of Achilles, it is pretty much as a bull is jealous of his fellow. He permits himself to be restrained and led by Ulysses, without looking before him: the grossest flattery decoys him. The Greeks have urged him to accept Hector's challenge. Behold him puffed up with pride, scorning to answer anyone, not knowing what he says or does. Thersites cries, "Good-morrow, Ajax"; and he replies, "Thanks, Agamemnon." He has no further thought than to contemplate his

[1] "The Tempest," iv. 1.

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enormous frame, and roll majestically his big stupid eyes. When the day of the fight has come, he strikes at Hector as on an anvil. After a good while they are separated. "I am not warm yet," says Ajax, "let us fight again." [2] Cloten is less massive than this phlegmatic ox; but he is just as idiotic, just as vainglorious, just as coarse. The beautiful Imogen, urged by his insults and his scullion manners, tells him that his whole body is not worth as much a Posthumus's meanest garment. He is stung to the quick, repeats the words several times; he cannot shake off the idea, and runs at it again and again with his head down, like an angry ram:

"*Cloten.* 'His garment?' Now, the devil—
Imogen. To Dorothy my woman hie thee presently—
C. 'His garment?' . . . You have abused me: 'His meanest garment!' . . . I'll be revenged: 'His meanest garment!' Well." [3]

He gets some of Posthumus's garments, and goes to Milford Haven, expecting to meet Imogen there. On his way he mutters thus:

"With that suit upon my back, will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valor, which will then be a torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust has dined—which, as I say, to vex her I will execute in the clothes that she so praised—to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again." [4]

Others again, are but babblers: for example, Polonius, the grave brainless counsellor; a great baby, not yet out of his "swathing clouts"; a solemn booby, who rains on men a shower of counsels, compliments, and maxims; a sort of court speaking-trumpet, useful in grand ceremonies, with the air of a thinker, but fit only to spout words. But the most complete of all these characters is that of the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," a gossip, loose in her talk, a regular kitchen oracle, smelling of the stew-pan and old boots, foolish, impudent, immoral, but otherwise a good creature, and affectionate to her nurse-child. Mark this disjointed and never-ending gossip's babble:

"*Nurse.* 'Faith I can tell her age unto an hour.
Lady Capulet. She's not fourteen. . . .

[2] See "Troilus and Cressida," ii. 3, the jesting manner in which the generals drive on this fierce brute.
[3] "Cymbeline," ii. 3.
[4] Ibid. iii. 5.

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Nurse. Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls!—
Were of an age: well, Susan is with God;
She was too good for me: but, as I said,
On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen;
That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years;
And she was wean'd—I never shall forget it—
Of all the days of the year, upon that day:
For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
Sitting in the sun under the dove-house wall;
My lord and you were then at Mantua:—
Nay, I do bear a brain:—but, as I said,
When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
Of my dug and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
To see it tetchy and fall out with the dug!
Shake, quoth the dove-house: 'twas no need, I trow,
To bid me trudge:
And since that time it is eleven years;
For then she could stand alone; nay, by the rood,
She could have run and waddled all about;
For even the day before, she broke her brow." [5]

Then she tells an indecent anecdote, which she begins over again four times. She is silenced: what then? She has her anecdote in her head, and cannot cease repeating it and laughing to herself. Endless repetitions are the mind's first step. The vulgar do not pursue the straight line of reasoning and of the story; they repeat their steps, as it were merely marking time: struck with an image, they keep it for an hour before their eyes, and are never tired of it. If they do advance, they turn aside to a hundred subordinate ideas before they get at the phrase required. They allow themselves to be diverted by all the thoughts which come across them. This is what the nurse does; and when she brings Juliet news of her lover, she torments and wearies her, less from a wish to tease than from a habit of wandering from the point:

"*Nurse.* Jesu, what haste? can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?
Juliet. How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied: is't good or bad?

[5] "Romeo and Juliet," i. 3.

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N. Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! no, not he: though his face be better than any man's, yet his legs excels all men's; and for a hand and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare: he is not the flower of courtesy, but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb. Go thy ways, wench; serve God. What, have you dined at home?

J. No, no: but all this did I know before.
What says he of our marriage? what of that?

N. Lord, how my head aches! what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.
My back o' t'other side—O, my back, my back!
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,
To catch my death with jaunting up and down!

J. I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

N. Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous—Where is your mother?" [6]

It is never-ending. Her gabble is worse when she comes to announce to Juliet the death of her cousin and the banishment of Romeo. It is the shrill cry and chatter of an overgrown asthmatic magpie. She laments, confuses the names, spins roundabout sentences, ends by asking for *aqua-vitæ*. She curses Romeo, then brings him to Juliet's chamber. Next day Juliet is ordered to marry Earl Paris; Juliet throws herself into her nurse's arms, praying for comfort, advice, assistance. The other finds the true remedy: Marry Paris,

> "O, he's a lovely gentleman!
> Romeo's a dishclout to him: an eagle, madam,
> Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye
> As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart,
> I think you are happy in this second match,
> For it excels your first." [7]

This cool immorality, these weather-cock arguments, this fashion of estimating love like a fishwoman, completes the portrait.

Section V.—Men of Wit

The mechanical imagination produces Shakespeare's fool-characters: a quick, venturesome, dazzling, unquiet imagination, produces his men of wit. Of wit there are many kinds.

[6] "Romeo and Juliet," ii. 5. [7] Ibid. iii. 5.

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One, altogether French, which is but reason, a foe to paradox, scorner of folly, a sort of incisive common-sense, having no occupation but to render truth amusing and evident, the most effective weapon with an intelligent and vain people: such was the wit of Voltaire and the drawing-rooms. The other, that of improvisatores and artists, is a mere inventive rapture, paradoxical, unshackled, exuberant, a sort of self-entertainment, a phantasmagoria of images, flashes of wit, strange ideas, dazing and intoxicating, like the movement and illumination in a ball-room. Such is the wit of Mercutio, of the clowns, of Beatrice, Rosalind, and Benedick. They laugh, not from a sense of the ridiculous, but from the desire to laugh. You must look elsewhere for the campaigns with aggressive reason makes against human folly. Here folly is in its full bloom. Our folk think of amusement, and nothing more. They are good-humored; they let their wit prance gayly over the possible and the impossible. They play upon words, contort their sense, draw absurd and laughable inferences, send them back to one another, and without intermission, as if with shuttlecocks, and vie with each other in singularity and invention. They dress all their ideas in strange or sparkling metaphors. The taste of the time was for masquerades; their conversation is a masquerade of ideas. They say nothing in a simple style; they only seek to heap together subtle things, far-fetched, difficult to invent and to understand; all their expressions are over-refined, unexpected, extraordinary; they strain their thought, and change it into a caricature. "Alas, poor Romeo!" says Mercutio, "he is already dead; stabbed with a white wench's black eye; shot through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft." [1] Benedick relates a conversation he has just held with his mistress: "O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! an oak, but with one green leaf on it would have answered her; my very visor began to assume life, and scold with her." [2] These gay and perpetual extravagances show the bearing of the speakers. They do not remain quietly seated in their chairs, like the Marquesses in the "Misanthrope"; they whirl round, leap, paint their faces, gesticulate boldly their ideas; their wit-rockets end with a song. Young folk, soldiers and artists, they let off their fireworks of phrases, and gambol round

[1] "Romeo and Juliet," ii. 4. [2] "Much Ado about Nothing," ii. 1.

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about. "There was a star danced, and under that was I born."[3] This expression of Beatrice's aptly describes the kind of poetical, sparkling, unreasoning, charming wit, more akin to music than to literature, a sort of dream, which is spoken out aloud, and whilst wide awake, not unlike that described by Mercutio:

"O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife; and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces of the smallest spider's web,
The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her wagoner a small gray-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight,
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream. . . .
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a person's nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice:
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five-fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled much misfortune bodes. . . .
This is she."[4]

[3] "Romeo and Juliet," ii. 1. [4] Ibid. i. 4.

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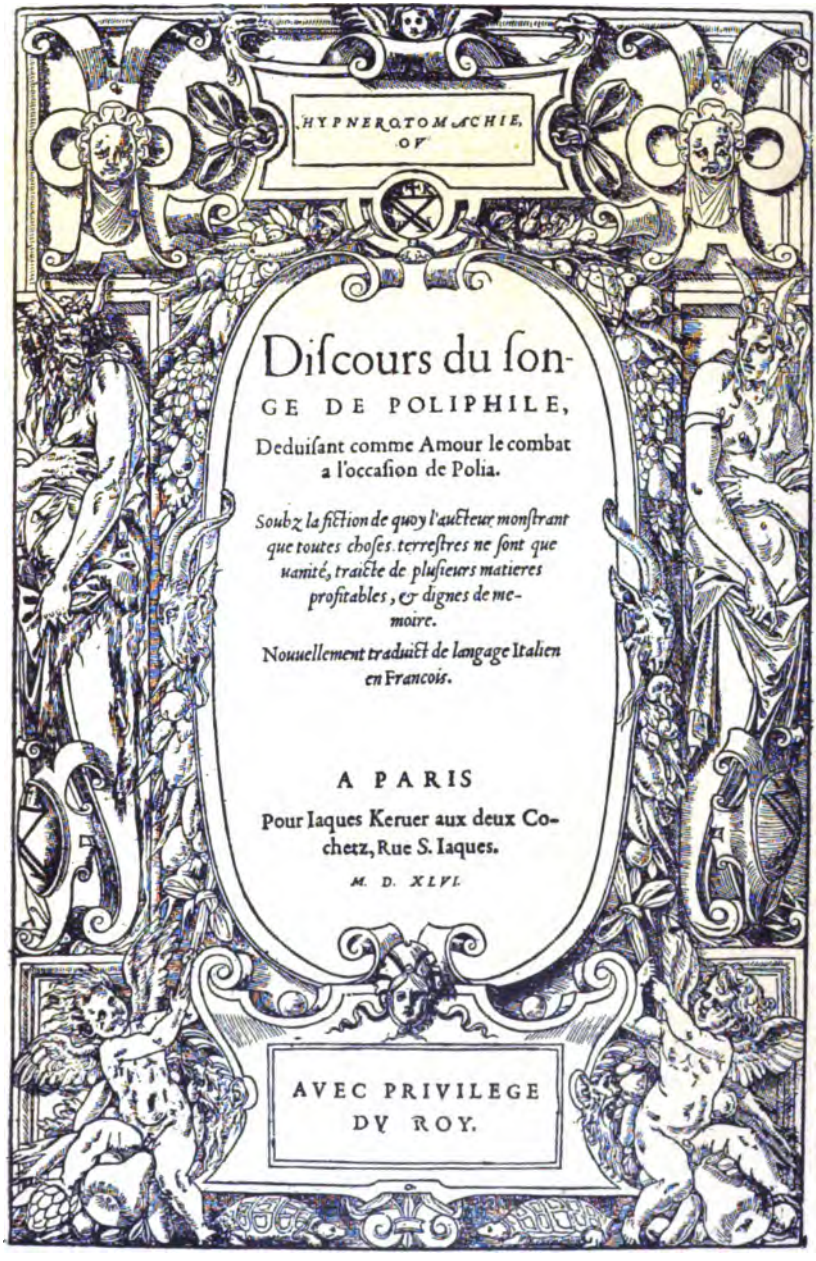

HYPNEROTOMACHIE,
OV

Discours du songe de Poliphile,

Deduisant comme Amour le combat a l'occasion de Polia.

Soubz la fiction de quoy l'auteur monstrant que toutes choses terrestres ne sont que vanité, traicte de plusieurs matieres profitables, & dignes de memoire.

Nouuellement traduict de langage Italien en Francois.

A PARIS

Pour Iaques Keruer aux deux Cochetz, Rue S. Iaques.

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Romeo interrupts him, or he would never end. Let the reader compare with the dialogue of the French theatre this little poem

> " Child of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy," [5]

introduced without incongruity in the midst of a conversation of the sixteenth century, and he will understand the difference between the wit which devotes itself to reasoning, or to record a subject for laughter, and that imagination which is self-amused with its own act.

Falstaff has the passions of an animal, and the imagination of a man of wit. There is no character which better exemplifies the fire and immorality of Shakespeare. Falstaff is a great supporter of disreputable places, swearer, gamester, idler, wine-bibber, as low as he well can be. He has a big belly, bloodshot eyes, bloated face, shaking legs; he spends his life with his elbows among the tavern-jugs, or asleep on the ground behind the arras; he only wakes to curse, lie, brag, and steal. He is as big a swindler as Panurge, who had sixty-three ways of making money, " of which the honestest was by sly theft." And what is worse, he is an old man, a knight, a courtier, and well educated. Must he not be odious and repulsive? By no means; we cannot help liking him. At bottom, like his brother Panurge, he is " the best fellow in the world." He has no malice in his composition; no other wish than to laugh and be amused. When insulted, he bawls out louder than his attackers, and pays them back with interest in coarse words and insults; but he owes them no grudge for it. The next minute he is sitting down with them in a low tavern, drinking their health like a brother and comrade. If he has vices, he exposes them so frankly that we are obliged to forgive him them. He seems to say to us, " Well, so I am, what then? I like drinking: isn't the wine good? I take to my heels when hard hitting begins; don't blows hurt? I get into debt, and do fools out their money; isn't it nice to have money in your pocket? I brag; isn't it natural to want to be well thought of? "—" Dost thou hear, Hal? thou knowest, in the state of innocency, Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty." [6]

[5] " Romeo and Juliet," i. 4.

[6] First part of " King Henry IV," iii. 3.

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Falstaff is so frankly immoral, that he ceases to be so. Conscience ends at a certain point; nature assumes its place, and man rushes upon what he desires, without more thought of being just or unjust than an animal in the neighboring wood. Falstaff, engaged in recruiting, has sold exemptions to all the rich people, and only enrolled starved and half-naked wretches. There's but a shirt and a half in all his company: that does not trouble him. Bah: "they'll find linen enough on every hedge." The prince, who has seen them, says, "I did never see such pitiful rascals." "Tut, tut," answers Falstaff, "good enough to toss; food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better; tush, man, mortal men, mortal men."[7] His second excuse is his unfailing spirit. If ever there was a man who could jabber, it is he. Insults and oaths, curses, jobations, protests, flow from him as from an open barrel. He is never at a loss; he devises a shift for every difficulty. Lies sprout out of him, fructify, increase, beget one another, like mushrooms on a rich and rotten bed of earth. He lies still more from his imagination and nature than from interest and necessity. It is evident from the manner in which he strains his fictions. He says he has fought alone against two men. The next moment it is four. Presently we have seven, then eleven, then fourteen. He is stopped in time, or he would soon be talking of a whole army. When unmasked, he does not lose his temper, and is the first to laugh at his boastings. "Gallants, lads, boys, hearts of gold. . . . What, shall we be merry? shall we have a play extempore?"[8] He does the scolding part of King Henry with so much truth that we might take him for a king, or an actor. This big pot-bellied fellow, a coward, a cynic, a brawler, a drunkard, a lewd rascal, a pothouse poet, is one of Shakespeare's favorites. The reason is, that his morals are those of pure nature, and Shakespeare's mind is congenial with his own.

Section VI.—Shakespeare's Women

Nature is shameless and gross amidst this mass of flesh, heavy with wine and fatness. It is delicate in the delicate body of women, but as unreasoning and impassioned in Desdemona as in Falstaff. Shakespeare's women are charming children, who

[7] First Part of "King Henry IV," iv. 2. [8] Ibid. ii. 4.

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feel in excess and love passionately. They have unconstrained manners, little rages, nice words of friendship, a coquettish rebelliousness, a graceful volubility, which recall the warbling and the prettiness of birds. The heroines of the French stage are almost men; these are women, and in every sense of the word. More imprudent than Desdemona a woman could not be. She is moved with pity for Cassio, and asks a favor for him passionately, recklessly, be the thing just or no, dangerous or no. She knows nothing of man's laws, and does not think of them. All that she sees is, that Cassio is unhappy:

"Be thou assured, good Cassio . . . My lord shall never rest;
I'll watch him, tame and talk him out of patience;
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I'll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio's suit." [1]

She asks her favor:

"*Othello.* Not now, sweet Desdemona; some other time.
Desdemona. But shall't be shortly?
O. The sooner, sweet, for you.
Des. Shall't be to-night at supper?
O. No, not to-night.
Des. To-morrow dinner, then?
O. I shall not dine at home;
I meet the captains at the citadel.
Des. Why, then, to-morrow night; or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn;
I prithee, name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days: in faith, he's penitent." [2]

She is somewhat astonished to see herself refused: she scolds Othello. He yields: who would not yield seeing a reproach in those lovely sulking eyes? O, says she, with a pretty pout:

"This is not a boon;
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do peculiar profit
To your own person." [3]

A moment after, when he prays her to leave him alone for a while, mark the innocent gayety, the ready observance, the playful child's tone:

[1] "Othello," iii. 3. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

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> "Shall I deny you? no: farewell, my lord. . . .
> Emilia, come: Be as your fancies teach you;
> Whate'er you be, I am obedient." [4]

This vivacity, this petulance, does not prevent shrinking modesty and silent timidity: on the contrary, they spring from a common cause, extreme sensibility. She who feels much and quickly has more reserve and more passion than others; she breaks out or is silent; she says nothing or everything. Such is this Imogen.

> "So tender of rebukes that words are strokes,
> And strokes death to her." [5]

Such is Virgilia, the sweet wife of Coriolanus; her heart is not a Roman one; she is terrified at her husband's victories: when Volumnia describes him stamping on the field of battle, and wiping his bloody brow with his hand, she grows pale:

> "His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood! . . .
> Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!" [6]

She wishes to forget all that she knows of these dangers; she dare not think of them. When asked if Coriolanus does not generally return wounded, she cries, "O, no, no, no." She avoids this cruel picture, and yet nurses a secret pang at the bottom of her heart. She will not leave the house: "I'll not over the threshold till my lord return." [7] She does not smile, will hardly admit a visitor; she would blame herself, as for a lack of tenderness, for a moment's forgetfulness or gayety. When he does return, she can only blush and weep. This exalted sensibility must needs end in love. All Shakespeare's women love without measure, and nearly all at first sight. At the first look Juliet cast on Romeo, she says to the nurse:

> "Go, ask his name: if he be married,
> My grave is like to be my wedding bed." [8]

It is the revelation of their destiny. As Shakespeare has made them, they cannot but love, and they must love till death. But this first look is an ecstasy: and this sudden approach of love is a transport. Miranda seeing Fernando, fancies that she

[4] "Othello," iii. 3.
[5] "Cymbeline," iii. 5.
[6] "Coriolanus," i. 3.
[7] Ibid.
[8] "Romeo and Juliet," i. 5.

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sees "a thing divine." She halts motionless, in the amazement of this sudden vision, at the sound of these heavenly harmonies which rise from the depths of her heart. She weeps, on seeing him drag the heavy logs; with her slender white hands she would do the work whilst he reposed. Her compassion and tenderness carry her away; she is no longer mistress of her words, she says what she would not, what her father has forbidden her to disclose, what an instant before she would never have confessed. The too full heart overflows unwittingly, happy, and ashamed at the current of joy and new sensations with which an unknown feeling has flooded her:

> "*Miranda.* I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of. . . .
> *Fernando.* Wherefore weep you?
> *M.* At mine unworthiness that dare not offer
> What I desire to give, and much less take
> What I shall die to want. . . .
> I am your wife, if you will marry me;
> If not, I'll die your maid." [9]

This irresistible invasion of love transforms the whole character. The shrinking and tender Desdemona, suddenly, in full Senate, before her father, renounces her father; dreams not for an instant of asking his pardon, or consoling him. She will leave for Cyprus with Othello, through the enemy's fleet and the tempest. Everything vanishes before the one and adored image which has taken entire and absolute possession of her whole heart. So, extreme evils, bloody resolves, are only the natural sequence of such love. Ophelia becomes mad, Juliet commits suicide; no one but looks upon such madness and death as necessary. You will not then discover virtue in these souls, for by virtue is implied a determinate desire to do good, and a rational observance of duty. They are only pure through delicacy or love. They recoil from vice as a gross thing, not as an immoral thing. What they feel is not respect for the marriage vow, but adoration of their husband. "O sweetest, fairest lily!" So Cymbeline speaks of one of these frail and lovely flowers which cannot be torn from the tree to which they have grown, whose least impurity would tarnish their whiteness. When Imogen learns that her husband means to kill her as being faithless, she does not revolt at the outrage; she has no

[9] "The Tempest," iii. 1.

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pride, but only love. "False to his bed!" She faints at the thought that she is no longer loved. When Cordelia hears her father, an irritable old man, already almost insane, ask her how she loves him, she cannot make up her mind to say aloud the flattering protestations which her sisters have been lavishing. She is ashamed to display her tenderness before the world, and to buy a dowry by it. He disinherits her, and drives her away; she holds her tongue. And when she afterwards finds him abandoned and mad, she goes on her knees before him, with such a touching emotion, she weeps over that dear insulted head with so gentle a pity, that you might fancy it was the tender voice of a desolate but delighted mother, kissing the pale lips of her child:

"O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
Of this child-changed father! . . .
O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made! . . . Was this a face
To be opposed against the warring winds?
. . . Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire. . . .
How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?" [10]

If, in short, Shakespeare comes across a heroic character, worthy of Corneille, a Roman, such as the mother of Coriolanus, he will explain by passion what Corneille would have explained by heroism. He will depict it violent and thirsting for the violent feelings of glory. She will not be able to refrain herself. She will break out into accents of triumph when she sees her son crowned; into imprecations of vengeance when she sees him banished. She will descend to the vulgarities of pride and anger; she will abandon herself to mad effusions of joy, to dreams of an ambitious fancy,[11] and will prove once more that

[10] "King Lear," iv. 7.

[11] "O ye're well met: the hoarded plague o' the gods
Requite your love!
If that I could for weeping, you should hear—
Nay, and you shall hear some. . . .
I'll tell thee what; yet go:
Nay but thou shalt stay too: I would my son
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,
His good sword in his hand."—Coriolanus, iv. 2.
See again, "Coriolanus," i. 3, the frank and abandoned triumph of a woman of the people, "I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man."

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the impassioned imagination of Shakespeare has left its trace in all the creatures whom it has called forth.

Section VII.—Types of Villains

Nothing is easier to such a poet than to create perfect villains. Throughout he is handling the unruly passions which make their character, and he never hits upon the moral law which restrains them; but at the same time, and by the same faculty, he changes the inanimate masks, which the conventions of the stage mould on an identical pattern, into living and illusory figures. How shall a demon be made to look as real as a man? Iago is a soldier of fortune who has roved the world from Syria to England, who, nursed in the lowest ranks, having had close acquaintance with the horrors of the wars of the sixteenth century, had drawn thence the maxims of a Turk and the philosophy of a butcher; principles he has none left. "O my reputation, my reputation!" cries the dishonored Cassio. "As I am an honest man," says Iago, "I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation." [1] As for woman's virtue, he looks upon it like a man who has kept company with slave-dealers. He estimates Desdemona's love as he would estimate a mare's: that sort of thing lasts so long—then . . . And then he airs an experimental theory with precise details and nasty expressions like a stud doctor. "It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor, nor he his to her. . . . These Moors are changeable in their wills; . . . the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice." [2] Desdemona, on the shore, trying to forget her cares, begs him to sing the praises of her sex. For every portrait he finds the most insulting insinuations. She insists, and bids him take the case of a deserving woman. "Indeed," he replies, "she was a wight, if ever such wight were, . . . to suckle fools and chronicle small beer." [3] He also says, when Desdemona asks him what he would write in praise of her: "O gentle lady do not put me to't,

[1] "Othello," ii. 3. [2] Ibid. i. 3. [3] Ibid. ii. 1.

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for I am nothing, if not critical."[4] This is the key to his character. He despises man; to him Desdemona is a little wanton wench, Cassio an elegant word-shaper, Othello a mad bull, Roderigo an ass to be basted, thumped, made to go. He diverts himself by setting these passions at issue; he laughs at it as at a play. When Othello, swooning, shakes in his convulsions, he rejoices at this capital result: "Work on, my medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught."[5] You would take him for one of the poisoners of the time, studying the effect of a new potion on a dying dog. He only speaks in sarcasms; he has them ready for everyone, even for those whom he does not know. When he wakes Brabantio to inform him of the elopement of his daughter, he tells him the matter in coarse terms, sharpening the sting of the bitter pleasantry, like a conscientious executioner, rubbing his hands when he hears the culprit groan under the knife. "Thou art a villain!" cries Brabantio. "You are—a senator!" answers Iago. But the feature which really completes him, and makes him take rank with Mephistopheles, is the atrocious truth and the cogent reasoning by which he likens his crime to virtue.[6] Cassio, under his advice, goes to see Desdemona, to obtain her intercession for him; this visit is to be the ruin of Desdemona and Cassio. Iago, left alone, hums for an instant quietly, then cries:

> "And what's he then that says I play the villain?
> When this advice is free I give and honest,
> Probal to thinking and indeed the course
> To win the Moor again."[7]

To all these features must be added a diabolical energy,[8] an inexhaustible inventiveness in images, caricatures, obscenity, the manners of a guard-room, the brutal bearing and tastes of a trooper, habits of dissimulation, coolness, hatred, and patience, contracted amid the perils and devices of a military life, and the continuous miseries of long degradation and frustrated hope; you will understand how Shakespeare could transform abstract treachery into a concrete form, and how Iago's atrocious vengeance is only the natural consequence of his character, life, and training.

[4] "Othello," ii. 1.
[5] Ibid. iv. 1.
[6] See the like cynicism and scepticism in Richard III. Both begin by slandering human nature, and both are misanthropical of malice prepense.
[7] "Othello," ii. 3.
[8] See his conversation with Brabantio, then with Roderigo, Act i.

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Section VIII.—Principal Characters

How much more visible is this impassioned and unfettered genius of Shakespeare in the great characters which sustain the whole weight of the drama! The startling imagination, the furious velocity of the manifold and exuberant ideas, passion let loose, rushing upon death and crime, hallucinations, madness, all the ravages of delirium bursting through will and reason: such are the forces and ravings which engender them. Shall I speak of dazzling Cleopatra, who holds Antony in the whirlwind of her devices and caprices, who fascinates and kills, who scatters to the winds the lives of men as a handful of desert dust, the fatal Eastern sorceress who sports with love and death, impetuous, irresistible, child of air and fire, whose life is but a tempest, whose thought, ever barbed and broken, is like the crackling of a lightning flash? Of Othello, who, beset by the graphic picture of physical adultery, cries at every word of Iago like a man on the rack; who, his nerves hardened by twenty years of war and shipwreck, grows mad and swoons for grief, and whose soul, poisoned by jealousy, is distracted and disorganized in convulsions and in stupor? Or of old King Lear, violent and weak, whose half-unseated reason is gradually toppled over under the shocks of incredible treacheries, who presents the frightful spectacle of madness, first increasing, then complete, of curses, howlings, superhuman sorrows, into which the transport of the first access of fury carries him, and then of peaceful incoherence, chattering imbecility, into which the shattered man subsides; a marvellous creation, the supreme effort of pure imagination, a disease of reason, which reason could never have conceived?[1] Amid so many portraitures let us choose two or three to indicate the depth and nature of them all. The critic is lost in Shakespeare, as in an immense town; he will describe a couple of monuments, and entreat the reader to imagine the city.

Plutarch's Coriolanus is an austere, coldly haughty patrician, a general of the army. In Shakespeare's hands he becomes a coarse soldier, a man of the people as to his language and man-

[1] See again, in Timon, and Hotspur more particularly, perfect examples of vehement and unreasoning imagination.

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ners, an athlete of war, with a voice like a trumpet; whose eyes by contradiction are filled with a rush of blood and anger, proud and terrible in mood, a lion's soul in the body of a bull. The philosopher Plutarch told of him a lofty philosophic action, saying that he had been at pains to save his landlord in the sack of Corioli. Shakespeare's Coriolanus has indeed the same disposition, for he is really a good fellow; but when Lartius asks him the name of this poor Volscian, in order to secure his liberty, he yawns out:

> "By Jupiter! forgot.
> I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.
> Have we no wine here?" [2]

He is hot, he has been fighting, he must drink; he leaves his Volscian in chains, and thinks no more of him. He fights like a porter, with shouts and insults, and the cries from that deep chest are heard above the din of the battle like the sounds from a brazen trumpet. He has scaled the walls of Corioli, he has butchered till he is gorged with slaughter. Instantly he turns to the army of Cominius, and arrives red with blood, "as he were flay'd." "Come I too late?" Cominius begins to compliment him. "Come I too late?" he repeats. The battle is not yet finished: he embraces Cominius:

> "O! let me clip ye
> In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart
> As merry as when our nuptial day was done." [3]

For the battle is a real holiday to him. Such senses, such a strong frame, need the outcry, the din of battle, the excitement of death and wounds. This haughty and indomitable heart needs the joy of victory and destruction. Mark the display of his patrician arrogance and his soldier's bearing, when he is offered the tenth of the spoils:

> "I thank you, general;
> But cannot make my heart consent to take
> A bribe to pay my sword." [4]

The soldiers cry, Marcius! Marcius! and the trumpets sound. He gets into a passion: rates the brawlers:

> "No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
> My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch—

[2] "Coriolanus," i. 9. [3] Ibid. i. 6. [4] Ibid. i. 9.

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. . . You shout me forth
In acclamations hyperbolical;
As if I loved my little should be dieted
In praises sauced with lies." [5]

They are reduced to loading him with honors: Cominius gives him a war-horse; decrees him the cognomen of Coriolanus; the people shout Caius Marcius Coriolanus! He replies:

"I will go wash;
And when my face is fair, you shall perceive
Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you.
I mean to stride your steed." [6]

This loud voice, loud laughter, blunt acknowledgment, of a man who can act and shout better than speak, foretell the mode in which he will treat the plebeians. He loads them with insults; he cannot find abuse enough for the cobblers, tailors, envious cowards, down on their knees for a coin. "To beg of Hob and Dick!" "Bid them wash their faces and keep their teeth clean." But he must beg, if he would be consul; his friends constrain him. It is then that the passionate soul, incapable of self-restraint, such as Shakespeare knew how to paint, breaks forth without hinderance. He is there in his candidate's gown, gnashing his teeth, and getting up his lesson in this style:

"What must I say?
'I pray, sir'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace:—'Look, sir, my wounds!
I got them in my country's service, when
Some certain of your brethren roar'd and ran
From the noise of our own drums.'" [7]

The tribunes have no difficulty in stopping the election of a candidate who begs in this fashion. They taunt him in full Senate, reproach him with his speech about the corn. He repeats it, with aggravations. Once roused, neither danger nor prayer restrains him:

"His heart's his mouth:
And, being angry, does forget that ever
He heard the name of death." [8]

He rails against the people, the tribunes, ediles, flatterers of the plebs. "Come, enough," says his friend Menenius.

[5] "Coriolanus," i. 9. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid. ii. 3. [8] Ibid. iii. 1.

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"Enough, with over-measure," says Brutus the tribune. He retorts:

> "No, take more:
> What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
> Seal what I end withal! . . . At once pluck out
> The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
> The sweet which is their poison." [9]

The tribune cries, Treason! and bids seize him. He cries:

> "Hence, old goat! . . .
> Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones
> Out of thy garments!" [10]

He strikes him, drives the mob off: he fancies himself amongst Volscians. "On fair ground I could beat forty of them!" And when his friends hurry him off, he threatens still, and

> "Speak(s) o' the people
> As if you (he) were a god to punish, not
> A man of their infirmity." [11]

Yet he bends before his mother, for he has recognized in her a soul as lofty and a courage as intractable as his own. He has submitted from his infancy to the ascendancy of this pride which he admires. Volumnia reminds him: "My praises made thee first a soldier." Without power over himself, continually tossed on the fire of his too hot blood, he has always been the arm, she the thought. He obeys from involuntary respect, like a soldier before his general, but with what effort!

> "*Coriolanus.* The smiles of knaves
> Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
> The glances of my sight! a beggar's tongue
> Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees
> Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
> That hath received an alms!—I will not do't. . . .
> *Volumnia.* . . . Do as thou list.
> Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
> But owe thy pride thyself.
> *Cor.* Pray, be content:
> Mother, I am going to the market-place;
> Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,
> Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved
> Of all the trades in Rome." [12]

[9] "Coriolanus," iii. 1. [10] Ibid. [11] Ibid. [12] Ibid. iii. 2.

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He goes, and his friends speak for him. Except a few bitter asides, he appears to be submissive. Then the tribunes pronounce the accusation, and summon him to answer as a traitor:

> "*Cor.* How! traitor!
> *Men.* Nay, temperately: your promise.
> *Cor.* The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!
> Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!
> Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
> In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in
> Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say,
> 'Thou liest,' unto thee with a voice as free
> As I do pray the gods." [13]

His friends surround him, entreat him: he will not listen; he foams at the mouth, he is like a wounded lion:

> "Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
> Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger
> But with a grain a day, I would not buy
> Their mercy at the price of one fair word." [14]

The people vote exile, supporting by their shouts the sentence of the tribune:

> "*Cor.* You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
> As reek o' the rotten fens, whose love I prize
> As the dead carcasses of unburied men
> That do corrupt my air, I banish you. . . . Despising,
> For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
> There is a world elsewhere." [15]

Judge of his hatred by these raging words. It goes on increasing whilst waiting for vengeance. We find him next with the Volscian army before Rome. His friends kneel before him, he lets them kneel. Old Menenius, who had loved him as a son, only comes now to be driven away. "Wife, mother, child, I know not." [16] He knows not himself. For this strength of hating in a noble heart is the same as the force of loving. He has transports of tenderness as of rage, and can contain himself no more in joy than in grief. He runs, spite of his resolution, to his wife's arms; he bends his knee before his mother. He had summoned the Volscian chiefs to make them witnesses of his refusals; and before them, he grants all, and weeps. On his

[13] "Coriolanus," iii. 3. [14] Ibid. [15] Ibid. [16] Ibid. v. 2.

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return to Corioli, an insulting word from Aufidius maddens him, and drives him upon the daggers of the Volscians. Vices and virtues, glory and misery, greatness and feebleness, the unbridled passion which composes his nature, endowed him with all.

If the life of Coriolanus is the history of a mood, that of Macbeth is the history of a monomania. The witches' prophecy has sunk into his mind at once, like a fixed idea. Gradually this idea corrupts the rest, and transforms the whole man. He is haunted by it; he forgets the thanes who surround him and "who stay upon his leisure"; he already sees in the future an indistinct chaos of images of blood:

> ". . . Why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs? . . .
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not." [17]

This is the language of hallucination. Macbeth's hallucination becomes complete when his wife has persuaded him to assassinate the king. He sees in the air a blood-stained dagger, "in form as palpable, as this which now I draw." His whole brain is filled with grand and terrible phantoms, which the mind of a common murderer could never have conceived: the poetry of which indicates a generous heart, enslaved to an idea of fate, and capable of remorse:

> ". . . Now o'er the one half world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
> Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. . . . (*A bell rings.*)
> I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell." [18]

He has done the deed, and returns tottering, haggard, like a drunken man. He is horrified at his bloody hands, "these

[17] "Macbeth," i. 3. [18] Ibid. ii. 1.

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hangman's hands." Nothing now can cleanse them. The whole ocean might sweep over them, but they would keep the hue of murder. "What hands are here? ha, they pluck out mine eyes!" He is disturbed by a word which the sleeping chamberlains uttered:

> "One cried, 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other;
> As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
> Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
> When they did say, 'God bless us!' . . .
> But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen!'
> I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
> Stuck in my throat." [19]

Then comes a strange dream; a frightful vision of the punishment that awaits him descends upon him.

Above the beating of his heart, the tingling of the blood which seethes in his brain, he had heard them cry:

> "'Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast." [20]

And the voice, like an angel's trumpet, calls him by all his titles:

> "'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
> Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more!'" [21]

This idea, incessantly repeated, beats in his brain, with monotonous and quick strokes, like the tongue of a bell. Insanity begins; all the force of his mind is occupied by keeping before him, in spite of himself, the image of the man whom he has murdered in his sleep:

> "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. (*Knock.*)
> Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!" [22]

Thenceforth, in the rare intervals in which the fever of his mind is assuaged, he is like a man worn out by a long malady. It is the sad prostration of maniacs worn out by their fits of rage:

> "Had I but died an hour before this chance,
> I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant

[19] "Macbeth," ii. 2. [20] Ibid. [21] Ibid. [22] Ibid. ii. 3.

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There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of." [23]

When rest has restored force to the human machine, the fixed idea shakes him again, and drives him onward, like a pitiless horseman, who has left his panting horse only for a moment, to leap again into the saddle, and spur him over precipices. The more he has done, the more he must do:

" I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er. . . ." [24]

He kills in order to preserve the fruit of his murders. The fatal circlet of gold attracts him like a magic jewel; and he beats down, from a sort of blind instinct, the heads which he sees between the crown and him:

" But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
Whom we to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further." [25]

Macbeth has ordered Banquo to be murdered, and in the midst of a great feast he is informed of the success of his plan. He smiles, and proposes Banquo's health. Suddenly, conscience-smitten, he sees the ghost of the murdered man; for this phantom, which Shakespeare summons, is not a mere stage-trick: we feel that here the supernatural is unnecessary, and that Macbeth would create it even if hell would not send it. With muscles twitching, dilated eyes, his mouth half open with deadly terror, he sees it shake its bloody head, and cries with that hoarse voice, which is only to be heard in maniacs' cells:

" Prithee, see there? Behold! look! lo! how say you?
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

[23] " Macbeth," ii. 3. [24] Ibid. iii. 4. [25] Ibid. iii. 2.

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If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites. . . .
Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time, . . .
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear: the times have been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools: . . .
Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!" [26]

His body trembling like that of an epileptic, his teeth clenched, foaming at the mouth, he sinks on the ground, his limbs writhe, shaken with convulsive quiverings, whilst a dull sob swells his panting breast, and dies in his swollen throat. What joy can remain for a man beset by such visions? The wide dark country, which he surveys from his towering castle, is but a field of death, haunted by ominous apparitions; Scotland, which he is depopulating, a cemetery,

"Where . . . the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken." [27]

His soul is "full of scorpions." He has "supp'd full with horrors," and the loathsome odor of blood has disgusted him with all else. He goes stumbling over the corpses which he has heaped up, with the mechanical and desperate smile of a maniac-murderer. Thenceforth death, life, all is one to him; the habit of murder has placed him out of the pale of humanity. They tell him that his wife is dead:

"*Macbeth.* She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player

[26] "Macbeth," iii. 4. [27] Ibid. iv. 3.

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> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing." [28]

There remains for him the hardening of the heart in crime, the fixed belief in destiny. Hunted down by his enemies, "bear-like, tied to a stake," he fights, troubled only by the prediction of the witches, sure of being invulnerable so long as the man whom they have described does not appear. Henceforth his thoughts dwell on a supernatural world, and to the last he walks with his eyes fixed on the dream, which has possessed him, from the first.

The history of Hamlet, like that of Macbeth, is a story of moral poisoning. Hamlet has a delicate soul, an impassioned imagination, like that of Shakespeare. He has lived hitherto, occupied in noble studies, skilful in mental and bodily exercises, with a taste for art, loved by the noblest father, enamored of the purest and most charming girl, confiding, generous, not yet having perceived, from the height of the throne to which he was born, aught but the beauty, happiness, grandeur of nature and humanity.[29] On this soul, which character and training make more sensitive than others, misfortune suddenly falls, extreme, overwhelming of the very kind to destroy all faith and every motive for action: with one glance he has seen all the vileness of humanity; and this insight is given him in his mother. His mind is yet intact; but judge from the violence of his style, the crudity of his exact details, the terrible tension of the whole nervous machine, whether he has not already one foot on the verge of madness:

> "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
> That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
> But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
> So excellent a king, . . . so loving to my mother

[28] "Macbeth," v. 5. [29] Goethe, "Wilhelm Meister."

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That he might not let e'en the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
. . . And yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body, . . .
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good!
But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue!" [20]

Here already are contortions of thought, a beginning of hallucination, the symptoms of what is to come after. In the middle of conversation the image of his father rises before his mind. He thinks he sees him. How then will it be when the "canonised bones have burst their cerements," "the sepulchre hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws," and when the ghost comes in the night, upon a high "platform" of land, to tell him of the tortures of his prison of fire, and of the fratricide, who has driven him thither? Hamlet grows faint, but grief strengthens him, and he has a desire for living:

"Hold, hold, my heart;
And you my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up! Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.—Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, . . .
And thy commandment all alone shall live, . . .
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark:
So, uncle, there you are." [21] (*Writing.*)

This convulsive outburst, this fevered writing hand, this frenzy of intentness, prelude the approach of a kind of monomania. When his friends come up, he treats them with the speeches of a child or an idiot. He is no longer master of his words; hollow phrases whirl in his brain, and fall from his mouth as in a dream. They call him; he answers by imitating

[20] "Hamlet," i. 2. [21] Ibid. i. 5.

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the cry of a sportsman whistling to his falcon: "Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come." Whilst he is in the act of swearing them to secrecy, the ghost below repeats "Swear." Hamlet cries, with a nervous excitement and a fitful gayety:

"Ah ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?
Come on—you hear this fellow in the cellarage—
Consent to swear. . . .
Ghost (*beneath*). Swear.
Hamlet. Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground.
Come hither, gentlemen. . . . Swear by my sword.
Ghost (*beneath*). Swear.
Ham. Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer!" [32]

Understand that as he says this his teeth chatter, "pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other." Intense anguish ends with a kind of laughter, which is nothing else than a spasm. Thenceforth Hamlet speaks as though he had a continuous nervous attack. His madness is feigned, I admit; but his mind, as a door whose hinges are twisted, swings and bangs with every wind with a mad haste and with a discordant noise. He has no need to search for the strange ideas, apparent incoherencies, exaggerations, the deluge of sarcasms which he accumulates. He finds them within him; he does himself no violence, he simply gives himself up to himself. When he has the piece played which is to unmask his uncle, he raises himself, lounges on the floor, lays his head in Ophelia's lap; he addresses the actors, and comments on the piece to the spectators; his nerves are strung, his excited thought is like a surging and crackling flame, and cannot find fuel enough in the multitude of objects surrounding it, upon all of which it seizes. When the king rises unmasked and troubled, Hamlet sings, and says, "Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir!" [33] And he laughs terribly, for he is resolved on murder. It is clear that this state is a disease, and that the man will not survive it.

In a soul so ardent of thought, and so mighty of feeling, what is left but disgust and despair? We tinge all nature with the color of our thoughts; we shape the world according to our

[32] "Hamlet," i. 5. [33] Ibid. iii. 2.

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own ideas; when our soul is sick, we see nothing but sickness in the universe:

"This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither." [34]

Henceforth his thought sullies whatever it touches. He rails bitterly before Ophelia against marriage and love. Beauty! Innocence! Beauty is but a means of prostituting innocence: "Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? . . . What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us." [35]

When he has killed Polonius by accident, he hardly repents it; it is one fool less. He jeers lugubriously:

"*King.* Now Hamlet, where's Polonius?
Hamlet. At supper.
K. At supper! where?
H. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him." [36]

And he repeats in five or six fashions these gravedigger jests. His thoughts already inhabit a churchyard; to this hopeless philosophy a genuine man is a corpse. Public functions, honors, passions, pleasures, projects, science, all this is but a borrowed mask, which death removes, so that people may see what we are, an evil-smelling and grinning skull. It is this sight he goes to see by Ophelia's grave. He counts the skulls which the gravedigger turns up; this was a lawyer's, that a courtier's. What bows, intrigues, pretensions, arrogance! And here now is a clown knocking it about with his spade, and playing "at loggats with 'em." Cæsar and Alexander have turned to clay and make the earth fat; the masters of the world have served to "patch a wall." "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must

[34] "Hamlet," ii. 2. [35] Ibid. iii. 1. [36] Ibid. iv. 3.

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come; make her laugh at that." [37] When a man has come to this, there is nothing left but to die.

This heated imagination, which explains Hamlet's nervous disease and his moral poisoning, explains also his conduct. If he hesitates to kill his uncle, it is not from horror of blood or from our modern scruples. He belongs to the sixteenth century. On board ship he wrote the order to behead Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and to do so without giving them "shriving-time." He killed Polonius, he caused Ophelia's death, and has no great remorse for it. If for once he spared his uncle, it was because he found him praying, and was afraid of sending him to heaven. He thought he was killing him when he killed Polonius. What his imagination robs him of, is the coolness and strength to go quietly and with premeditation to plunge a sword into a breast. He can only do the thing on a sudden suggestion; he must have a moment of enthusiasm; he must think the king is behind the arras, or else, seeing that he himself is poisoned, he must find his victim under his foil's point. He is not master of his acts; opportunity dictates them; he cannot plan a murder, but must improvise it. A too lively imagination exhausts the will, by the strength of images which it heaps up, and by the fury of intentness which absorbs it. You recognize in him a poet's soul, made not to act, but to dream, which is lost in contemplating the phantoms of its creation, which sees the imaginary world too clearly to play a part in the real world; an artist whom evil chance has made a prince, whom worse chance has made an avenger of crime, and who, destined by nature for genius, is condemned by fortune to madness and unhappiness. Hamlet is Shakespeare, and, at the close of this gallery of portraits which have all some features of his own, Shakespeare has painted himself in the most striking of all.

If Racine or Corneille had framed a psychology, they would have said, with Descartes: Man is an incorporeal soul, served by organs, endowed with reason and will, dwelling in palaces or porticos, made for conversation and society, whose harmonious and ideal action is developed by discourse and replies, in a world constructed by logic beyond the realms of time and place.

If Shakespeare had framed a psychology, he would have said, with Esquirol: [38] Man is a nervous machine, governed by a

[37] "Hamlet," v. 1.

[38] A French physician (1772-1844), celebrated for his endeavors to improve the treatment of the insane.—Tr.

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mood, disposed to hallucinations, carried away by unbridled passions, essentially unreasoning, a mixture of animal and poet, having instead of mind rapture, instead of virtue sensibility, imagination for prompter and guide, and led at random, by the most determinate and complex circumstances, to sorrow, crime, madness, and death.

Section IX.—Characteristics of Shakespeare's Genius

Could such a poet always confine himself to the imitation of nature? Will this poetical world which is going on in his brain never break loose from the laws of the world of reality? Is he not powerful enough to follow his own laws? He is; and the poetry of Shakespeare naturally finds an outlet in the fantastical. This is the highest grade of unreasoning and creative imagination. Despising ordinary logic, it creates another; it unites facts and ideas in a new order, apparently absurd, in reality regular; it lays open the land of dreams, and its dreams seem to us the truth.

When we enter upon Shakespeare's comedies, and even his half-dramas,[1] it is as though we met him on the threshold, like an actor to whom the prologue is committed, to prevent misunderstanding on the part of the public, and to tell them: "Do not take too seriously what you are about to hear: I am amusing myself. My brain, being full of fancies, desired to array them, and here they are. Palaces, distant landscapes, transparent clouds which blot in the morning the horizon with their gray mists, the red and glorious flames into which the evening sun descends, white cloisters in endless vista through the ambient air, grottos, cottages, the fantastic pageant of all human passions, the irregular sport of unlooked-for adventures—this is the medley of forms, colors, sentiments, which I let become entangled and confused in my presence, a many-tinted skein of glistening silks, a slender arabesque, whose sinuous curves, crossing and mingled, bewilder the mind by the whimsical variety of their infinite complications. Don't regard it as a picture. Don't look for a precise composition, a sole and increasing interest, the skilful management of a well-ordered and congruous plot.

[1] "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," "Tempest," "Winter's Tale," etc., "Cymbeline," "Merchant of Venice," etc.

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I have tales and novels before me which I am cutting up into scenes. Never mind the *finis*, I am amusing myself on the road. It is not the end of the journey which pleases me, but the journey itself. Is there any need in going so straight and quick? Do you only care to know whether the poor merchant of Venice will escape Shylock's knife? Here are two happy lovers, seated under the palace walls on a calm night; wouldn't you like to listen to the peaceful reverie which arises like a perfume from the bottom of their hearts?

"'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
(*Enter musicians.*)
Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.
Jessica. I am never merry when I hear sweet music.'[2]

"Have I not the right, when I see the big laughing face of a clownish servant, to stop near him, see him gesticulate, frolic, gossip, go through his hundred pranks and his hundred grimaces, and treat myself to the comedy of his spirit and gayety? Two fine gentlemen pass by. I hear the rolling fire of their metaphors, and I follow their skirmish of wit. Here in a corner is the artless arch face of a young wench. Do you forbid me to linger by her, to watch her smiles, her sudden blushes, the childish pout of her rosy lips, the coquetry of her pretty motions? You are in a great hurry if the prattle of this fresh and musical voice can't stop you. Is it no pleasure to view this succession of sentiments and faces? Is your fancy so dull that you must have the mighty mechanism of a geometrical plot to shake it? My sixteenth century playgoers were easier to move. A sunbeam that had lost its way on an old wall, a foolish song

[2] "Merchant of Venice," v. 1.

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thrown into the middle of a drama, occupied their mind as well as the blackest of catastrophes. After the horrible scene in which Shylock brandished his butcher's knife before Antonio's bare breast, they saw just as willingly the petty household wrangle, and the amusing bit of raillery which ends the piece. Like soft moving water, their soul rose and sank in an instant to the level of the poet's emotion, and their sentiments readily flowed in the bed he had prepared for them. They let him stray here and there on his journey, and did not forbid him to make two voyages at once. They allowed several plots in one. If but the slightest thread united them it was sufficient. Lorenzo eloped with Jessica, Shylock was frustrated in his revenge, Portia's suitors failed in the test imposed upon them; Portia, disguised as a doctor of laws, took from her husband the ring which he had promised never to part with; these three or four comedies, disunited, mingled, were shuffled and unfolded together, like an unknotted skein in which threads of a hundred colors are entwined. Together with diversity, my spectators allowed improbability. Comedy is a slight winged creature, which flutters from dream to dream, whose wings you would break if you held it captive in the narrow prison of common-sense. Do not press its fictions too hard; do not probe their contents. Let them float before your eyes like a charming swift dream. Let the fleeting apparition plunge back into the bright misty land from whence it came. For an instant it deluded you; let it suffice. It is sweet to leave the world of realities behind you; the mind rests amidst impossibilites. We are happy when delivered from the rough chains of logic, to wander amongst strange adventures, to live in sheer romance, and know that we are living there. I do not try to deceive you, and make you believe in the world where I take you. A man must disbelieve it in order to enjoy it. We must give ourselves up to illusion, and feel that we are giving ourselves up to it. We must smile as we listen. We smile in "The Winter's Tale" when Hermione descends from her pedestal, and when Leontes discovers his wife in the statue, having believed her to be dead. We smile in "Cymbeline" when we see the lone cavern in which the young princes have lived like savage hunters. Improbability deprives emotions of their sting. The events interest or touch us without making us suffer. At the very moment when sympathy is too

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intense, we remind ourselves that it is all a fancy. They become like distant objects, whose distance softens their outline, and wraps them in a luminous veil of blue air. Your true comedy is an opera. We listen to sentiments without thinking too much of plot. We follow the tender or gay melodies without reflecting that they interrupt the action. We dream elsewhere on hearing music; here I bid you dream on hearing verse."

Then the speaker of the prologue retires, and the actors come on.

"As You Like It" is a caprice.[8] Action there is none; interest barely; likelihood still less. And the whole is charming. Two cousins, princes' daughters, come to a forest with a court clown, Celia disguised as a shepherdess, Rosalind as a boy. They find here the old duke, Rosalind's father, who, driven out of his duchy, lives with his friends like a philosopher and a hunter. They find amorous shepherds, who with songs and prayers pursue intractable shepherdesses. They discover or they meet with lovers who become their husbands. Suddenly it is announced that the wicked Duke Frederick, who had usurped the crown, has just retired to a cloister, and restored the throne to the old exiled duke. Everyone gets married, everyone dances, everything ends with a "rustic revelry." Where is the pleasantness of these puerilities? First, the fact of its being puerile; the absence of the serious is refreshing. There are no events, and there is no plot. We gently follow the easy current of graceful or melancholy emotions, which takes us away and moves us about without wearying. The place adds to the illusion and charm. It is an autumn forest, in which the sultry rays permeate the blushing oak leaves, or the half-stripped ashes tremble and smile to the feeble breath of evening. The lovers wander by brooks that "brawl" under antique roots. As you listen to them you see the slim birches, whose cloak of lace grows glossy under the slant rays of the sun that gilds them, and the thoughts wander down the mossy vistas in which their footsteps are not heard. What better place could be chosen for the comedy of sentiment and the play of heart-fancies? Is not this a fit spot in which to listen to love-talk? Someone has seen Orlando, Rosalind's lover, in this glade; she

[8] In English, a word is wanting to express the French "fantaisie" used by M. Taine, in describing this scene: what in music is called a capriccio. Tennyson calls the "Princess" a medley, but it is ambiguous.—Tr.

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hears it and blushes. "Alas the day! . . . What did he, when thou sawest him? What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? Where remains he? How parted he with thee? and when shalt thou see him again?" Then, with a lower voice, somewhat hesitating: "Looks he as freshly as he did the day he wrestled?" She is not yet exhausted: "Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak. Sweet, say on."[4] One question follows another, she closes the mouth of her friend, who is ready to answer. At every word she jests, but agitated, blushing, with a forced gayety; her bosom heaves, and her heart beats. Nevertheless she is calmer when Orlando comes; bandies words with him; sheltered under her disguise, she makes him confess that he loves Rosalind. Then she plagues him, like the frolic, the wag, the coquette she is. "Why, how now, Orlando, where have you been all this while? You a lover?" Orlando repeats that he loves Rosalind, and she pleases herself by making him repeat it more than once. She sparkles with wit, jests, mischievous pranks; pretty fits of anger, feigned sulks, bursts of laughter, deafening babble, engaging caprices. "Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humor, and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very, very Rosalind?" And every now and then she repeats with an arch smile, "And I am your Rosalind; am I not your Rosalind?"[5] Orlando protests that he would die. Die! Who ever thought of dying for love? Leander? He took one bath too many in the Hellespont; so poets have said he died for love. Troilus? A Greek broke his head with a club; so poets have said he died for love. Come, come, Rosalind will be softer. And then she plays at marriage with him, and makes Celia pronounce the solemn words. She irritates and torments her pretended husband; tells him all the whims she means to indulge in, all the pranks she will play, all the teasing he will have to endure. The retorts come one after another like fire-works. At every phrase we follow the looks of these sparkling eyes, the curves of this laughing mouth, the quick movements of this supple figure. It is a bird's petulance and volubility. "O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love." Then she provokes her cousin

[4] "As You Like It," iii. 2. [5] Ibid. iv. 1.

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Celia, sports with her hair, calls her by every woman's name. Antitheses without end, words all a-jumble, quibbles, pretty exaggerations, word-racket; as you listen, you fancy it is the warbling of a nightingale. The trill of repeated metaphors, the melodious roll of the poetical gamut, the summer-warbling rustling under the foliage, change the piece into a veritable opera. The three lovers end by chanting a sort of trio. The first throws out a fancy, the others take it up. Four times this strophe is renewed; and the symmetry of ideas, added to the jingle of the rhymes, makes of a dialogue a concerto of love:

> "*Phebe.* Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.
> *Silvius.* It is to be all made of sighs and tears;
> And so am I for Phebe.
> *P.* And I for Ganymede.
> *Orlando.* And I for Rosalind.
> *Rosalind.* And I for no woman. . . .
> *S.* It is to be all made of fantasy,
> All made of passion, and all made of wishes,
> All adoration, duty, and observance,
> All humbleness, all patience and impatience,
> All purity, all trial, all observance;
> And so I am for Phebe.
> *P.* And so am I for Ganymede.
> *O.* And so am I for Rosalind.
> *R.* And so am I for no woman." [6]

The necessity of singing is so urgent that a minute later songs break out of themselves. The prose and the conversation end in lyric poetry. We pass straight on into these odes. We do not find ourselves in a new country. We feel the emotion and foolish gayety as if it were a holiday. We see the graceful couple whom the song of the two pages brings before us, passing in the misty light "o'er the green corn-field," amid the hum of sportive insects, on the finest day of the flowering springtime. Unlikelihood grows natural, and we are not astonished when we see Hymen leading the two brides by the hand to give them to their husbands.

Whilst the young folk sing, the old folk talk. Their life also is a novel, but a sad one. Shakespeare's delicate soul, bruised by the shocks of social life, took refuge in contemplations of soli-

[6] "As You Like It," v. 2.

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tary life. To forget the strife and annoyances of the world, he must bury himself in a wide silent forest, and

> "Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
> Loose and neglect the creeping hours of time." [7]

We look at the bright images which the sun carves on the white beech-boles, the shade of trembling leaves flickering on the thick moss, the long waves of the summit of the trees; then the sharp sting of care is blunted; we suffer no more, simply remembering that we suffered once; we feel nothing but a gentle misanthropy, and being renewed, we are the better for it. The old duke is happy in his exile. Solitude has given him rest, delivered him from flattery, reconciled him to nature. He pities the stags which he is obliged to hunt for food:

> "Come, shall we go and kill us venison?
> And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
> Being native burghers of this desert city,
> Should in their own confines with forked heads
> Have their round haunches gored." [8]

Nothing sweeter than this mixture of tender compassion, dreamy philosophy, delicate sadness, poetical complaints, and rustic songs. One of the lords sings:

> "Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
> Thou art not so unkind
> As man's ingratitude;
> Thy tooth is not so keen,
> Because thou art not seen,
> Although thy breath be rude.
> Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
> Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
> Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
> This life is most jolly." [9]

Amongst these lords is found a soul that suffers more, Jacques the melancholy, one of Shakespeare's best-loved characters, a transparent mask behind which we perceive the face of the poet. He is sad because he is tender; he feels the contact of things too keenly, and what leaves others indifferent, makes him weep.[10]

[7] "As You Like It," ii. 7.
[8] Ibid. ii. 1.
[9] Ibid. ii. 7.
[10] Compare Jacques with the Alceste of Molière. It is the contrast between a misanthrope through reasoning and one through imagination.

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He does not scold, he is sad; he does not reason, he is moved; he has not the combative spirit of a reforming moralist; his soul is sick and weary of life. Impassioned imagination leads quickly to disgust. Like opium, it excites and shatters. It leads man to the loftiest philosophy, then lets him down to the whims of a child. Jacques leaves other men abruptly, and goes to the quiet nooks to be alone. He loves his sadness, and would not exchange it for joy. Meeting Orlando, he says:

> "Rosalind is your love's name?
> *Orlando.* Yes, just.
> *Jacques.* I do not like her name." [11]

He has the fancies of a nervous woman. He is scandalized because Orlando writes sonnets on the forest trees. He is eccentric, and finds subjects of grief and gayety where others would see nothing of the sort:

> "A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
> A motley fool; a miserable world!
> As I do live by food, I met a fool;
> Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
> And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms,
> In good set terms and yet a motley fool. . . ."

Jacques hearing him moralize in such a manner begins to laugh "sans intermission" that a fool could be so meditative:

> "O noble fool; a worthy fool! Motley's the only wear. . . .
> O that I were a fool!
> I am ambitious for a motley coat." [12]

The next minute he returns to his melancholy dissertations, bright pictures whose vivacity explains his character, and betrays Shakespeare, hiding under his name:

> "All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances;
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
> Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
> And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,

[11] "As You Like It," iii. 2. [12] Ibid. ii. 7.

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Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
In second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." [13]

"As you Like it" is a half dream. "Midsummer Night's Dream" is a complete one.

The scene, buried in the far-off mist of fabulous antiquity, carries us back to Theseus, Duke of Athens, who is preparing his palace for his marriage with the beautiful queen of the Amazons. The style, loaded with contorted images, fills the mind with strange and splendid visions, and the airy elf-world divert the comedy into the fairy-land from whence it sprung.

Love is still the theme: of all sentiments, is it not the greatest fancy-weaver? But love is not heard here in the charming prattle of Rosalind; it is glaring, like the season of the year. It does not brim over in slight conversations, in supple and skipping prose; it breaks forth into big rhyming odes, dressed in magnificent metaphors, sustained by impassioned accents, such as a warm night, odorous and star-spangled, inspires in a poet and a lover. Lysander and Hermia agree to meet.

"*Lysander.* To-morrow night when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.
Hermia. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie. . . .
There my Lysander and myself shall meet." [14]

[13] "As You Like It," ii. 7. [14] "Midsummer Night's Dream," i. 1.

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They get lost, and fall asleep, wearied, under the trees. Puck squeezes in the youth's eyes the juice of a magic flower, and changes his heart. Presently, when he awakes, he will become enamored of the first woman he sees. Meanwhile Demetrius, Hermia's rejected lover, wanders with Helena, whom he rejects, in the solitary wood. The magic flower changes him in turn, he now loves Helena. The lovers flee and pursue one another, beneath the lofty trees, in the calm night. We smile at their transports, their complaints, their ecstasies, and yet we join in them. This passion is a dream, and yet it moves us. It is like those airy webs which we find at morning on the crest of the hedgerows where the dew has spread them, and whose weft sparkles like a jewel-casket. Nothing can be more fragile, and nothing more graceful. The poet sports with emotions; he mingles, confuses, redoubles, interweaves them; he twines and untwines these loves like the mazes of a dance, and we see the noble and tender figures pass by the verdant bushes, beneath the radiant eyes of the stars, now wet with tears, now bright with rapture. They have the abandonment of true love, not the grossness of sensual love. Nothing causes us to fall from the ideal world in which Shakespeare conducts us. Dazzled by beauty, they adore it, and the spectacle of their happiness, their emotion, and their tenderness, is a kind of enchantment.

Above these two couples flutters and hums the swarm of elves and fairies. They also love. Titania, their queen, has a young boy for her favorite, son of an Indian king, of whom Oberon, her husband, wishes to deprive her. They quarrel, so that the elves creep for fear into the acorn cups, in the golden primroses. Oberon, by way of vengeance, touches Titania's sleeping eyes with the magic flower, and thus on waking the nimblest and most charming of the fairies finds herself enamored of a stupid blockhead with an ass's head. She kneels before him; she sets on his "hairy temples a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers":

> "And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
> Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
> Stood now within the pretty floweret's eyes,
> Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail." [15]

She calls round her all her fairy attendants;

[15] "Midsummer Night's Dream," iv. 2.

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"Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes. . . .
Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently." [16]

It was necessary, for her love brayed horribly, and to all the offers of Titania, replied with a petition for hay. What can be sadder and sweeter than this irony of Shakespeare? What raillery against love, and what tenderness for love! The sentiment is divine; its object unworthy. The heart is ravished, the eyes blind. It is a golden butterfly, fluttering in the mud; and Shakespeare, whilst painting its misery, preserves all its beauty:

"Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy. . . .
Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. . . .
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!" [17]

At the return of morning, when

"The eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams," [18]

the enchantment ceases, Titania awakes on her couch of wild thyme and drooping violets. She drives the monster away; her recollections of the night are effaced in a vague twilight:

"These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds." [19]

[16] "Midsummer Night's Dream," iii. 1. [18] Ibid. iii. 2.
[17] Ibid. iv. 1. [19] Ibid. iv. 1.

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And the fairies

> " Go seek some dew drops here
> And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear." [20]

Such is Shakespeare's fantasy, a slight tissue of bold inventions, of ardent passions, melancholy mockery, dazzling poetry, such as one of Titania's elves would have made. Nothing could be more like the poet's mind than these nimble genii, children of air and flame, whose flights " compass the globe " in a second, who glide over the foam of the waves and skip between the atoms of the winds. Ariel flies, an invisible songster, around shipwrecked men to console them, discovers the thoughts of traitors, pursues the savage beast Caliban, spreads gorgeous visions before lovers, and does all in a lightning-flash:

> " Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
> In a cowslip's bell I lie. . . .
> Merrily, merrily shall I live now
> Under the blossom that hangs on the bough. . . .
> I drink the air before me, and return
> Or ere your pulse twice beat." [21]

Shakespeare glides over things on as swift a wing, by leaps as sudden, with a touch as delicate.

What a soul! what extent of action, and what sovereignty of an unique faculty! what diverse creations, and what persistence of the same impress! There they all are united, and all marked by the same sign, void of will and reason, governed by mood, imagination, or pure passion, destitute of the faculties contrary to those of the poet, dominated by the corporeal type which his painter's eyes have conceived, endowed by the habits of mind and by the vehement sensibility which he finds in himself.[22] Go through the groups, and you will only discover in them divers forms and divers states of the same power. Here, a herd of brutes, dotards, and gossips, made up of a mechanical imagination; further on, a company of men of wit, animated by a gay and foolish imagination; then, a charming swarm of women whom their delicate imagination raises so high, and their self-forgetting love carries so far; elsewhere a band of villains, hardened by unbridled passions, inspired by artistic rapture; in the

[20] "Midsummer Night's Dream," ii. 1.
[21] " Tempest," v. 1.
[22] There is the same law in the organic and in the moral world. It is what Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire calls unity of composition.

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centre a mournful train of grand characters, whose excited brain is filled with sad or criminal visions, and whom an inner destiny urges to murder, madness, or death. Ascend one stage, and contemplate the whole scene: the aggregate bears the same mark as the details. The drama reproduces promiscuously uglinesses, basenesses, horrors, unclean details, profligate and ferocious manners, the whole reality of life just as it is, when it is unrestrained by decorum, common-sense, reason, and duty. Comedy, led through a phantasmagoria of pictures, gets lost in the likely and the unlikely, with no other connection but the caprice of an amused imagination, wantonly disjointed and romantic, an opera without music, a concerto of melancholy and tender sentiments, which bears the mind into the supernatural world, and brings before our eyes on its fairy-wings the genius which has created it. Look now. Do you not see the poet behind the crowd of his creations? They have heralded his approach. They have all shown somewhat of him. Ready, impetuous, impassioned, delicate, his genius is pure imagination, touched more vividly and by slighter things than ours. Hence his style, blooming with exuberant images, loaded with exaggerated metaphors, whose strangeness is like incoherence, whose wealth is superabundant, the work of a mind, which, at the least incitement, produces too much and takes too wide leaps. Hence this involuntary psychology, and this terrible penetration, which instantaneously perceiving all the effects of a situation, and all the details of a character, concentrates them in every response, and gives to a figure a relief and a coloring which create illusion. Hence our emotion and tenderness. We say to him, as Desdemona to Othello: "I love thee for the battles, sieges, fortunes thou hast passed, and for the distressful stroke that thy youth suffered."

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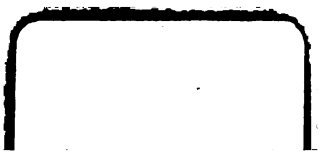

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